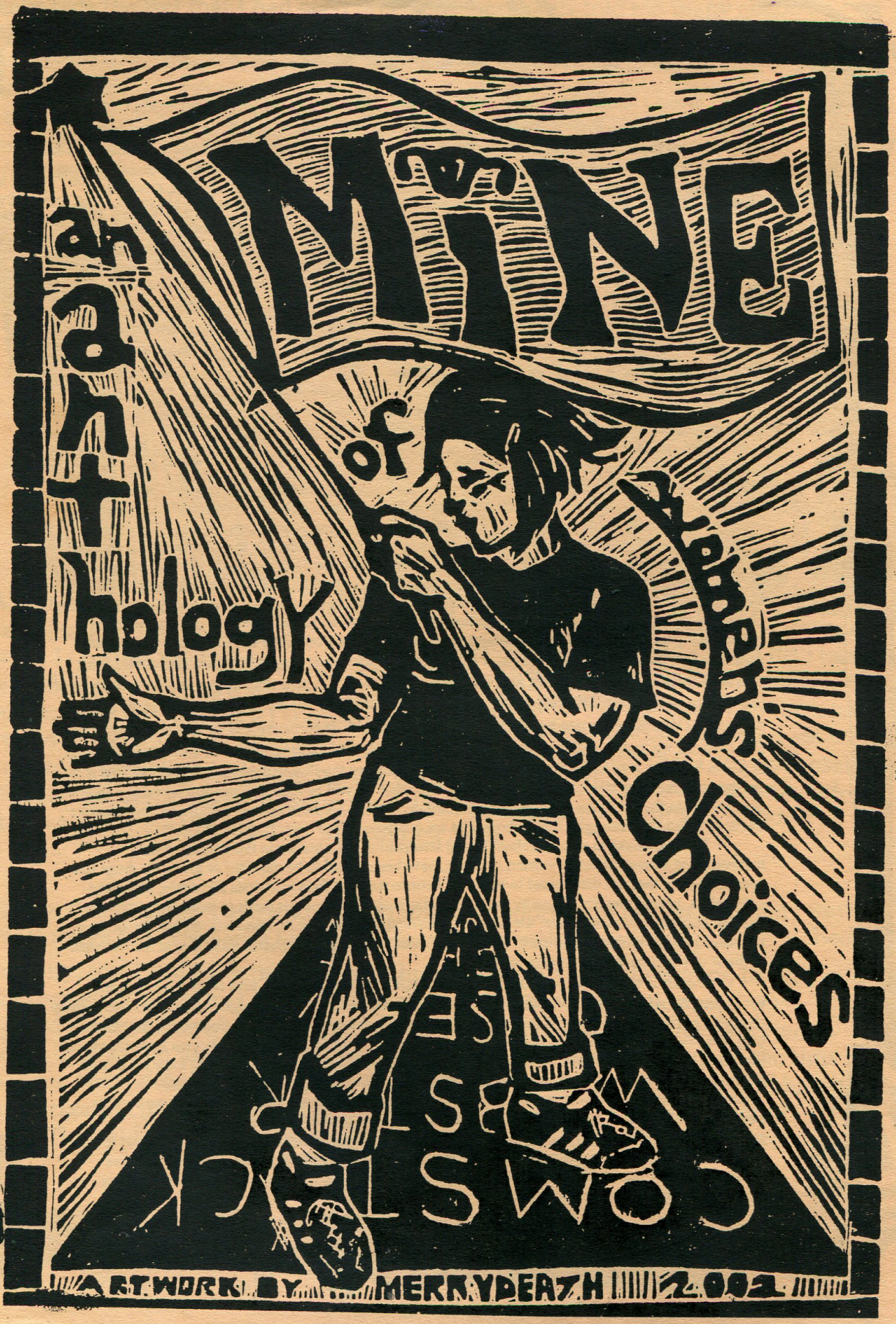

MING
an anthology of
Reviewers Choices
ARTWORK BY MERRYDEATH 2.002

$2.00

Intro

When I started this project I thought it would be fairly simple to find women to tell their stories. I put up flyers in women's libraries and centers at universities; placed call outs to women's chat rooms on the internet, sent flyers to conferences and distributors, placed ads in various publications. I contacted pro-choice organizations to find stories and to attempt to find funding for the printing of the zine. After a year of collecting stories, I finally have enough for a good size first printing. Still, there are numerous friends and acquaintances who have had abortions, but feel uncomfortable writing about their experiences. I received submissions that ranged from women writing stoically pro-choice, women writing with mixed feelings, and stories that were obviously made up by a pro-lifer. There were the stories that seemed honestly written by women who had had an abortion but felt very horrified and distraught about it. I had a few quandaries where I decided not to print stories because of language that I felt contradicted my intent for this zine. At times I felt discouraged and frustrated and then I was reminded at my own actions and beliefs I had before I had gotten pregnant, and remembered that abortion is still highly stigmatized, even in the minds of people who consider themselves pro-choice. Women also have a hard time telling their stories. Women are still often made to feel guilty or stigmatized for having an abortion, and some of this exists in the pro-choice community. Many women vocalize their beliefs that they are pro-choice but wouldn't have an abortion themselves. It is statements like these that sometimes make us feel that even within our activist circles we cannot talk about our experiences because they are still seen as choices "other" women make. Many women are greatly fearful of experiencing an abortion.

I want to provide a forum for women to tell their stories and to feel supported by other women around them. While we can tell which women have chosen to raise children, there is little if any outlet for women to feel comfortable talking about their decisions not to carry a pregnancy to term. The religious right has so much money and people; it seems there is no end to protestors in front of clinics and on the streets. Legally, there has been a steady chipping away of abortion rights with laws like the 24 hour waiting periods, parental consent, etc. which came from cases such as *Casey vs Planned Parenthood of Pennsylvania* and new amendments are discussed in congressional committees. Currently the Rights of the Unborn is a dangerous law that would significantly affect abortion access if passed. The Bush cabinet's policies are very clearly pro-life. Consistently, it is ignored that women are the ones faced with birthing questions, not the men writing the laws. I hope for a world where every child is a wanted child; that all kinds of contraceptives and information is over the counter, free and a basic tenent of our rights as women. We need safe, attainable health care for all reproductive heath choices we make. We deserve not to be lectured by our health care providers or any one else about the choices we make with our health. Our bodies do not belong to the courts. However, men in power fear that with unrestricted abortion and contraceptive laws we will end their blood line; that if we are the ones choosing whether or not to have children that we will be more independent, more free and therefore fight for our rights with the same power that they do. I believe that the struggle for reproductive freedom is linked to struggles for all those who are oppressed.

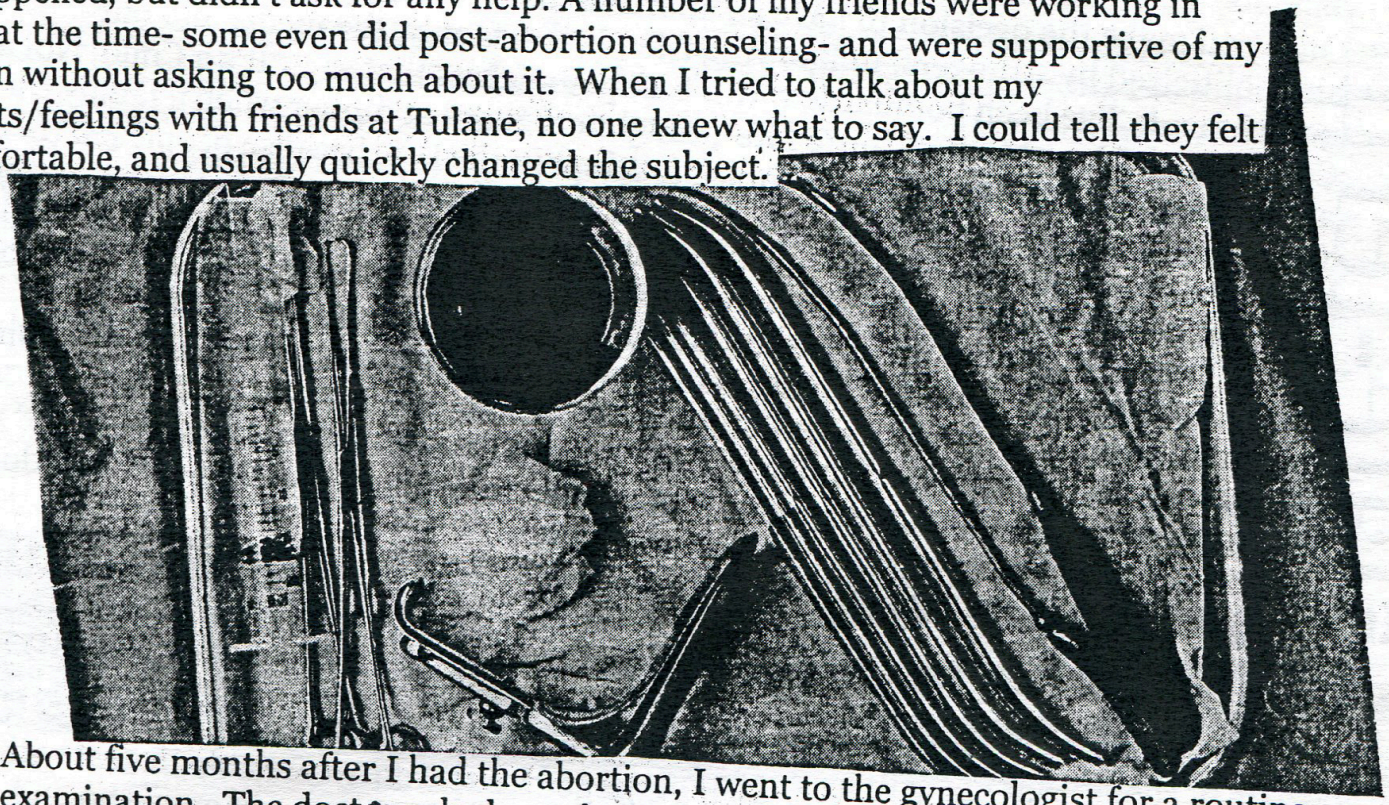
There are links to race and class; forced sterilization has a history in this country; where impoverished women of color, women in prison, have been forced to be sterilized or given test drugs like norplant before they are determined to be safe. I believe we must fight to liberate all people; of various color, class, gender identity, sexuality, religious beliefs, etc. If we see our needs as more important than those of another oppressed group; we reinforce a hierarchy of freedom for ourselves, but not for all. This zine is an attempt to draw attention to the fact that most women get pregnant at least once in their life and millions of pregnancies are not carried to term.

Death is a part of life; and for me I consider myself for-life and highly pro-choice. Pregnancy is more complicated than the traditional pro-choice versus pro-life arguments. Historically, ideas about the beginning of life varied greatly in different times and societies. In this country, ads for herbs to help bring on a menses appeared regularly in newspapers prior to Comstock laws. Women have always had abortions, and will continue to, whether it is legal or not. The most dangerous abortions have been those attempted by the pregnant woman on herself without guidance. This zine contains varied stories of terminate pregnancy. It is important for women to know that there are many choices but we need to educate ourselves about them and be careful. There is a lot of good information and also a lot of misinformation. Women have killed themselves using pennyroyal oil for instance; which is highly toxic even in small dosages. I encourage women to become more aware of their bodies, their reproductive choices. We must read, talk to others, and make educated decisions for ourselves. Ultimately it is our right and final word to make our own choices.

-Merry death

Made Possible in part from a grant from www.Choiceusa.org Many thanks!!

I didn't really hide the fact that I had been pregnant. I probably told too many people. At the time, most of my close friends in New Orleans were male and my girlfriends from home were scattered around the country. I wrote a few letters to them explaining what had happened, but didn't ask for any help. A number of my friends were working in clinics at the time- some even did post-abortion counseling- and were supportive of my decision without asking too much about it. When I tried to talk about my thoughts/feelings with friends at Tulane, no one knew what to say. I could tell they felt uncomfortable, and usually quickly changed the subject.



About five months after I had the abortion, I went to the gynecologist for a routine examination. The doctor asked me about my medical history, and I burst into tears when I told her that I had had an abortion. These tears came from somewhere deep inside of me; there were no particular thoughts that provoked them. A few seconds before, I felt fine, but once I started to cry I couldn't stop. The doctor asked me why I was so upset and I didn't know. Concerned, she recommended that I see a counselor. I went to a psychologist who said all the wrong things and then finally recommended anti-depressants, which highly offended me. I left pissed off and confused. I didn't understand where the emotion was coming from.

Throughout this time, my boyfriend was extremely supportive of me, and in many ways we went through the experience together. However, it was ultimately my decision, body, and recovery, and I had to learn on my own how our society expects women to deal with difficult reproductive choices. I didn't feel ashamed to have an abortion, and was unprepared for the silence I encountered when I wanted to talk about my experience. This sense of isolation took its toll on me. While abortion was showing up all the time in newspapers, being debated in Congress, discussed in feminist publications, and brought up in conversation by friends, I felt alone in dealing with the actual experience of abortion. The political "right to choose" remained abstract, not too intimate, not too specific.

Abortion:

Once you make the decision to have an abortion in our society, that choice is critiqued and politicized by strangers, unknowing friends and family, the media and our government. I've been bombarded with bumper stickers that say, "It's a Child, Not a Choice" and "Your Mother Chose Life", caught off guard at dinner when a family friend announces, "There aren't enough babies to adopt in the U.S. because people kill them," visually assaulted during Mardi Gras by a truck that went around New Orleans covered with pictures of aborted fetuses and a sign that said "AMERICAN HOLOCAUST" while coming to terms with the fact that one side of my family routinely joins anti-abortion picket lines with similar photographs and slogans. Many women who have had abortions learn to ignore the raging debate around the procedure and anti-abortionists' assault on women's humanity, but in the process, they also learn to keep their experiences to themselves. Similarly, pro-choice advocates have strategically downplayed the conflicting emotions that women have about abortion so that it doesn't interfere with their protection of abortion rights.

It's a procedure that fewer doctors, hospitals and clinics provide, next to no medical schools teach and almost no researchers study. the right to abortion may not be enou

In cultures where abortion isn't such a charged issue women are able to deal with their individual feelings about abortion in a saner manner. In Japan, women who end pregnancies call their unborn children "water children" and set up shrines where they can grieve/remember/come to terms with the loss they may feel they have experienced. In the United States, we have no rituals.

The problem isn't that people don't care, but rather that they don't know how to show support. I think it's really important that women communicate with one another about their experiences with abortion and with women's health issues in general. This dialogue is really what helped me resolve my unexplained feelings about abortion. Talking to women who have had abortions and struggled with the issues around it has been an empowering experience.

The Pope himself has denounced RU-486 as the 'pill of Cain—the monster that cynically kills

There are as many different reactions to abortion as there are women who have them, and I think its important that the feminist movement, and individual women, friends, and activists who comprise the ranks, to let people know that they are all legitimate. Just to have a safe space to talk about it: whether its to say that she feels really comfortable with her decision, or that she has conflicting emotions, whether she is dealing with the issue alone or with a partner, it's important not to silence women's experiences, but to learn and gather strength from them.

Pregnant women in jail teen abortion

han Harassment Did Not Halt Abortion Procedures

late-term abortion laws in bigotity

2

I had an abortion when I was nineteen years old. I was a junior in college and had been dating my boyfriend for about 8 months. We were really close, but definitely not ready to have a child. Once I realized that I was pregnant, I wanted to have an abortion as quickly as possible. I tried an herbal remedy at first. It was so disgusting I thought that it might actually work. I lay in bed and envisioned the concoction moving through my body and taking the developing cells with it, but nothing happened. In the end, my mom sent me three hundred dollars and I looked in the yellow pages for a doctor. I was privileged enough not to have to go to a clinic. Instead, I went to an ob-gyn doctor who has a private practice. It was all very discreet. He did an ultra-sound to see how far a long I was and said, "you're just a little bit pregnant." Louisiana law says you have to wait more than 24 hours after your first visit to the doctor to have the abortion- I think I went back 3 or 4 days later.

Physically, everything went really well. I was given a shot of something to make me fall asleep and was only conscious for the first minute or so of the procedure. I barely bled afterwards and didn't cramp at all. I slept for 18 hours straight, waking up once to eat some brownies my roommate had baked for me.

I grew up in a feminist household and as far as pregnancy was concerned, it was almost like a drill: if you became pregnant, go through these steps to get your life back in order. And when I found myself in that situation, I followed the steps and never second-guessed them. Afterwards. I was determined that I wouldn't miss school or any assignments, that my life wouldn't be disrupted.

"the abortion issue"

by Rachel Braunlin

"Entertainment Tonight" blaring through the wall - my neighbor goes to sleep with the tv on loud- and I close my eyes and try to sleep while some sycophantic lady blathers about a certain celebrity who can't stand the humidity in North Carolina 'cause it does terrible things to her hair and I wonder: which stories are worth telling?

The tv in the waiting room at the New Orleans East Women's Center was blaring Oprah - or was it Roseanne? A sign taped to the screen warned against changing the channel. All the seats were taken, and the line was out the door, so my friend and I sat on the floor in the vestibule. At least there was no tv out there. I regretted my choice of reading material: something dry and heavy that failed to distract. It's hard to concentrate when Roseanne (or was it Oprah?) gets going. The literature provided by the clinic was hardly more diverting - Time, Newsweek; People;some ladies' journal; abortion alternatives propaganda.

Abortion providers in Louisiana are required, by law, to present clients with a printed catalog of abortion alternative resources. You receive this book on your initial visit to the clinic; there is then a mandatory 24 hour waiting period " so you can think over your decision," as one clinic's receptionist told me brightly, patronizingly, over the phone. As if I did not know my own mind. As if I must surely be trpubled; conflicted over what had actually been an immediate and unquestionable conclusion. When I protested, saying my decision was firm, she said smugly, "well, it's the law." I was so infuriated I had to hang up on her. Abortion should be the gynecological equivilent of a tooth extraction. Few people would look askance at someone deciding to have a rotten tooth removed; I doubt that anyone has ever been commanded to "think it over" for 24 hours.

I hadn't expected getting an abortion in Louisiana to be easy or convenient - or necessarily safe or reliable, for that matter. (In fact, before I had the abortion, I had to sign a waiver stating that I acknowledged that the procedure might not be effective, and in the event that it was not, the clinic could not be held responsible.) Louisiana is staunchly Christian; right - wing; Republican. Legislative sessions begin with a prayer. In New Orleans, a city whose teen pregnancy rate is among the highest in the nation, Planned Parenthood offers no literature on abortion amidst the government-issue pamphlets on neo-natal and childcare, disease control (Is Your Man Shooting Smack? 'Cause You'll Get AIDS) and abortion alternatives. The staff won't mention abortion as an option. When I asked for information, all I got was a phone number scribbled on a scrap of paper. No doctors' names, no clinics - no choices, recommendations, or advice.

The very idea of getting an abortion in the Deep South conjured up lurid images in my overactive imagination; anticipation of a creepy and potentially dangerous experience made me extremely wary, to say the least. So naturally (following a briefly delusional phase during which I assumed I could probably induce an abortion through sheer force of will- despite the experiences of countless other women to the contrary) my first instinct was to rely on an herbal remedy. Now, I figured I was about a month pregnant; most herbal remedies are effective only within the first couple of weeks following conception, but I was determined that it would work. (I recently read a biography of an Indian Untouchable which mentions a successful herbal abortion performed at three months; unfortunately, there's no mention of what kind of herbs were used, except that it was a combination of four or five kinds of roots ground into a paste and mixed with water. The effect was apparently agonizingly painful, and caused the woman to bleed for nine days.)

I turned to my friends for advice. It seems like nearly every woman I know has at least one abortion story to tell... Someone lent me a book that contained a wealth of information: types of herbs; how to prepare and use them; where to find them growing wild and how to grow them yourself.

that offered further suggestions
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My sister recommended black and blue cohosh, and cotton root bark. I went to an apothecary to find these tinctures; the woman behind the counter leaned towards me, and dropping her voice to a conspiratorial whisper, she asked, "Do you want these for what I think you want them for?" Her treatment of the idea of abortion as a shameful secret requiring clandestine treatment appalled me: I had expected, I suppose, an alternative viewpoint to accompany an alteernative treatment...

She did, at least, contribute the information that both parsley and whole peeled garlic cloves, when inserted in the vagina, help induce uterine contractions. Drinking heavy infusions of fresh ginger root also has this effect. To this regimine I added dang qui (angelica root) and tea made from dried pennyroyal (as opposed to pennyroyal oil, which is so toxic that as little as a dropperful can actually kill you). Pennyroyal tea is unbelievably foul, but it is one of the stronger herbs.

When dosing with herbs, a rigorous schedule must be followed; it became impossible not to obsess over the situation when every hour or so I was swallowing something vile, or hunched over in the bathroom, fishing around in my twat for a stray piece of parsley, or reeling out of the kitchen of the joint I was working in, sickened by the smell of frying meat, stale beer, and cigarettes, and by the poisons I was bombarding my innards with. I was a woman possessed- my whole existence fixated on the urgent need to rid my body of the parasite invading me; cursing evolution for depriving me of an all-important regulatory feature (or are culture and society to blame, for alienating us from our physicality? Because if it's possible to regulate your own heartbeat, why not your uterus?)

After about two weeks, I was driven to a reluctant admittance that the herbs weren't having any appreciable effect. My fervent hope that every slightest twinge would develpp into the much anticipated cramps sigifying contractions met only with disappointment and a pervasive nausea.

Finally, in desperation, I turned to the Yellow Pages. There are seven listings for abortion providers and referral centers in the New Orleans are. Cost ranges from $200 to $500. In the course of one chilling, after-school-special style conversation with a representative of the Abortion Assistance Causeway Medical Clinic in Metarie, I was directed to "bring all the cash" and to "come alone" (most places insist that someone accompany you, so you don't have to drive yourself home). Needless to say, I did neither. This same place advised me that I would be subjected to a 4-5 hour examination, which would include some sort of movie you had to watch.

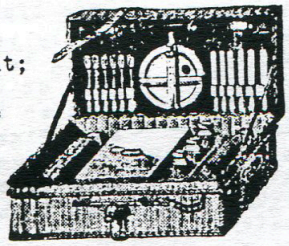
After a long and frustrating (and enraging) series of phone calls, I finally settled for the Gentilly Medical Clinic for Women. During my initial visit there, I was informed that they'd need to know my blood type. This simple request resulted in a wild goose chase that took me from a call to my doctor in NY (turns out he'd recently left the hospital under some sort of cloud, and the doctor who'd taken over his caseload couldn't or wouldn't find my files), to the Drop-In Center (a clinic for the homeless in New Orleans) to the plasma center across the street, to the blood bank, to Charity Hospital- finally, in desperation, I called my mom, distraught; wound up blurting out the reason for this unusual request in a rather tactless way, and then hanging up on her in frustration when she was unable to supply the information. (To her credit, she responded to this regrettable behavior amazingly well. I didn't have a phone; so she couldn't reach me that way, but she wrote me a letter of support, and told me she'd deposited some money in my bank account...) I never did find out my blood type. A blood test cost $50-$75, and the results took three days; I didn't have the money or the time. I decided to lie and claim the universal blood type- figuring that with all the various blood tests I've had over the years, I'd surely have found out if I had some rare type. While this was probably a really irresponsible (even stupid) thing to do, the odds seemed pretty good at the time. I waited 24 hours with an impatience born of self-righteous indignation; the following day, I returnrd to the clinic- only to be told that the doctor hadn't shown up; no one had heard from

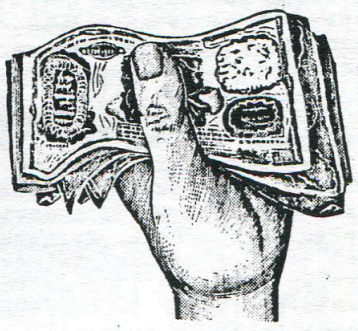
her or seemed to expect to. The receptionist told me she'd reschedule the appointment- next available date being in two weeks- and sent me home.

I was furious, and I had no intention of waiting another two weeks, or of returning to an obviously unreliable place...I made another appointment; this time at the New Orleans East Women's Center. My initial visit there was on Lundi Gras; instead of waiting 24 hours, I had to wait 48, as the clinic closed for Mardi Gras. When the doctor asked me my blood type, and I blithely lied and said "O..." (can't remember whether I said + or -), he narrowed his eyes and looked at me in disbelief. "Really? Are you sure? Because that's very rare." (Fuck. OOps.) "Yeah, sure I'm sure." (Fuck. Hope I don't need a goddam transfusion. What happens if you get the wrong blood type? Something unpleasant, I have no doubt.) He continued to cut his eyes at me as he made a note on my chart. "O.K. then- O..." I nodded and smiled, inwardly cursing the person who'd reassured me that that was, in fact, the universal type. I was given an ultrasound, which showed me to be twelve weeks pregnant. This meant that not only had I gotten pregnant at the end of a menstrual cycle, but that I had also, mysteriously, had a period while I was pregnant. This all struck me as incredible, and I suspected the clinic of falsifying the results so they could charge more (an extra $100, making the grand total of my misfortune- including the $50 spent on herbs- $400.) However, the doctor assured me that, although the circumstances were certainly unusual, it is indeed possible. I still have my suspicions, though. Anyway, there then followed my 48 hour waiting period. Went to work on Mardi Gras; the cook failed to show up. Lost a day of work but found $100 on the sidewalk outside the restaurant. Back to New Orleans East the next day, poor choice of reading material in hand, to sit on the floor in the vestibule and wait my turn. Finally they called my name... my friend made a bit of a scene when he was told he wasn't allowed in the room with me. Maybe that's why the nurse was so surly; she gave me some seriously unpleasant attitude that made me wonder why she was doing this for a living. The doctor was all right; while not necessarily kind or sympathetic, he at least took the trouble to explain each step of the procedure as he performed it, telling me what to expect. The procedure itself called a D&C (dilation& curetting) basically consists of a vaccuming out of the uterus. It's pretty uncomfortable; like bad menstrual cramps. I'd opted not to have anesthesia, since with it, you're required to stay at the clinic for an hour or more while it wears off, I guess; without it you're free to go after 15-20 minutes (so they can make sure you're not hemorraging). The procedure itself only took 10 or 15 minutes. Afterwards, I felt fine; maybe some mild cramps, and light bleeding that lasted a few days. It took two months before I resumed my period; when it came, tho, it was with a vengeance- 9 days of bleeding so heavy that I started to get really freaked out. I was travelling, and couldn't make it to a doctor, so it was unnerving (not to mention really inconvenient!) Finally, after 11 days all together, it stopped- to my immense relief.

The whole experience- the physical and psychological turmoil; the frustration and anger; the expense- was unpleasant to say the least...but still better, after all, than having to raise an unwanted baby.

-BY LORRAINE M.





I remember waiting. Wanting my period [redacted] to come like I've never wanted anything before. Everytime I felt something remotely close to a cramp, a flicker of hope would rise inside me as I rushed to the nearest bathroom- only to find plain, unblodied panties. I'd feel my heart drop and try to find some hope, basically trying to avoid the reality of it all.

After weeks of this torture, I made my boyfriend go with me to get a pregnancy test. I already knew inside, but hoped something else might be wrong- a cyst or some other medical problem- but not pregnancy. I couldn't believe it was happening to me- I was smarter than this. I didn't feel shameful for having sex, but like everyone would look down on me for getting pregnant, I was more responsible than that.....and all of the other self-esteem squandering things went through me daily.

During all of this, I was working a 9-5 phone shit job. Every morning I'd wake up, go into the bathroom, and turn on the shower. See this way no one could hear me throwing up. I hated it. I was like a daily reminder of what I thought was my biggest possible fuck-up of all time. After puking or dry heaving, I'd go through the motions of getting ready to talk to people on the phone all day. I remember fighting the sickness through the 30 minute drive to work. Hoping that I wouldn't have to pull over on the interstate to hurl. I was pretty much nauseous for the first five hours of my day- everyday.

When I think about it now, it amazes me at how far I'd go to hide something back then. I was even to the point of hurting myself. A friend told me about a former girl-friend that punched herself enough in the abdomen, that she had a miscarriage. Just like that- and she flushed it down the toilet of the girls bathroom in our high school. Somedays I tried this while showering before work when I was really low.

I knew that I needed to call and set up an appointment for an abortion. There was no way I could have a kid. My boyfriend and I were doing lots of drugs- mostly speed and acid. I doubted that it would be healthy. But I was also positively sure that I didn't want to be pregnant and birth a child. There was no question in my mind.

Basically, I was a scared, drugged up 19 year old girl with a boyfriend that would go along with whatever I wanted, but really wasn' t doing anything to help me. He wasn't working and most of my money went to drugs- trying to sedate myself from the reality of it.

I put off calling because of money. I wasn't aware that there was financial aid, and I guess I felt so ashamed that I didn't think to talk to anyone for help. When I finally called the Emma Goldman clinic, they asked me how far along I was in the pregnancy. My last period had been in early April and I think I was calling in mid to late June. (It's been five years since and my memory is a bit fuzzy on the exact number of weeks).

When I heard the woman's voice telling me that I was past their cut off date for the soonest open appointment, I felt the dread and horror shoot throughout my body. It was the same feeling I had when I saw the + on the pregnancy test; the same feeling I had when I walked into my home a year before and found out my dad died in a car crash.

But I was quickly relieved when she told me I could still get an abortion, I just had to go to the university hospital. She was so conforting, even though we only spoke for a couple minutes. She gave me the phone number and said "good luck". So I called the hospital and made an appointment for July 1.

I remember waking up that morning at my boyfriends. My anticipation was enough to get me up at 6am and prepare for the hour long drive we had to the hospital. I also had to call in sick to work that morning.

I realized that I would probably be fired because I'd already missed a ton of work because of being too nauseous to sit in front of a computer all day. But I really didn't give a shit. It was just a job and this was my body and my life. I couldn't wait for it to be over.

We had to go to the main building of the hospital first, then they shuttled us over to the building where the procedure would be performed. There was another girl in the van with her mother. She looked extremely young and scared- like she didn't want to be there. It made me wonder if it was her choice to be there or her mom's.

We entered the building and had to be buzzed into the waiting room. Then paperwork and surveys. There was also an Asain girl in the waiting room with us, that my boyfriend said reminded him of his former girlfriend from high school. He had come to the same hospital with her for an abortion a couple of years prior to this.

Then they took just me into a small office where they asked me various questions, basically making sure that I was sure. Then back to the waiting room, and eventually into a smaller office- almost the size of a closet, containing only a desk. Here they showed me paperwork explaining the cost of everything broken down. They told me the procedure that I'd be having (which after doing some reading I think was a dilation & evacuation I didn't keep any of the paperwork)but they didn't really explain ~~me~~ too may details. I was in such a hurry to get it out of me, I didn't ask any questions. I just gave them my cash and ~~got~~ got my receipt. Then back to the first room for some more waiting.

Eventually they took me into a different waiting room, only for the women recieving the abortions. They had me change into a paper gown in a sort of mini locker room and put my clothes into a locker. Then they took some blood. I don't remember what the blood was for- I think to determine my type. They had some difficulties doing this and it took the nurse at least three tries- which was both annoying and painful. Then more waiting with a pelvic exam to follow.

I had never had a pelvic exam before. I wasn't really nervous, just anxious- again- to get it over with.

Since I was at the university hospital, there was a student present for the exam. Everything the doctor did, she explained in detail to the woman student. They knew how far along I was, and as she pressed on my abdomen- I can still hear her voice say- "It's about the size of a grapefruit right now". How's that for a fucking mental image??!!?? It's not that I wanted to be shielded from anything, but that there may have been a better time or more compassionate way to let me know the dimensions of what was taking over my body.

Following the exam, they took me into the room where the abortion would be done. I remember walking into a bare room containing a table with stirrups, the machine with various utensils nearby, and an air conditioner in the window. It was freezing!

They had me lay on the table and the doctor began to talk me through the procedure. Again, my mind's a bit fuzzy on the details here. I recall a woman holding my hand and talking to me. But I definately remember the pain. Nobody told me how much it would hurt. I think since I was further along, it was probably worse. It felt like they were pulling me inside out- or trying their hardest to. Like the worst cramps I'd ever had X's 10. I also realized why the air conditioner was there. I started sweating profusely and the cold air blowing up through my thighs was refreshing.

I don't remember moving into the recovery room- the same room where they had drawn blood. There was an enya cd playing in the background as I sat and stared at some fish. The music made me want to cry, but I didn't. This was a time in my life when I didn't allow myself to feel much- and especially cry in front of others.

As I was reclined in a chair in the recovery room, I noticed the Asian girl sitting beside me. She started asking me questions and her english was very broken, but I could tell she was very distraught. She kept saying that she couldn't have a child, that her boyfriend wouldn't understand. But she also didn't seem to know if she was pregaant. I thought about what it would be like to be pregnant AND try to hide it from the male you're having sex with. But the nurse saw her asking me questions and pulled the sheet between us.

Then I suddenly got really cold again and the nurse brought me a paper blanket.

I don't know how long I was in that room. I remember changing back into my clothes and having to put the pad on my underwear for the bleeding. Then waiting outside with my boyfriend for the shuttle, smoking cigarettes.

Afterwards, I drove us to a restaurant where I enjoyed the first meal in weeks that didn't make me want to vomit.

I felt so relieved. Before I'd felt that my body was hijacked and that I was dying- or wanted to. Now I ~~felt~~ felt "cured" and got my life back.

I have no regrets about my abortion.

I've found that talking about it with others has helped me tremendously, to deal with the shame that seems to be passed along with having an abortion in this society. Nobody seems to talk about it. I think that women need to share their experiences, and realize how common it is- and also that there is NOTHING to feel bad about.

Jen 2001

an herb story

it is still so fresh in my mind that I don't quite know how to begin. it's fresh in that it has only been 1 month and some odd days (of this writing) that I performed an herbal abortion. a couple weeks after this I stumbled across the ad placed in a zine about this project and I figured I should put my two cents in. I am definitely not an authority on herbal abortificants, I tried something and it worked. I consider myself very lucky. but as lucky as I may be it is still traumatizing as hell and very difficult to write about. I feel I owe it no matter how hard it is because I wish I would've had something like this with me during that time for comfort and insight.

being a very regularly cycled girl (to the day/with the moon/every month) I became a bit concerned after being a few days late. I chocked it up to a UTI (after calling a clinic to schedule a free pregnancy test and being told that the body may delay menstruation while fighting off an infection and to wait). a week passed and I felt my breasts swelling and sore, my moods fluctuating and acute, and my abdomen feeling full and strange. I thought these were premenstrual signs but the blood never came. it scared me but I tried to write it off and waited some days later until the suspense was killing me and I broke down a purchased a test. it was positive. after reading over the directions again and thinking I may have read it wrong initially, I took another, also positive. and even though I could feel it in my body, the changes preparing for a baby, I still felt I needed more proof. I broke down and went to a clinic soon after and I knew even before they handed me the paper with the plus sign highlighted, asking me what I had planned to do. I was vague. I knew I didn't want to have a baby but I didn't want to have a surgical abortion either. they assumed I was keeping the child and this made me angry. I didn't want assumptions or any strangers interfering or inquiring about my decision. I had other plans (even though I had no idea what they may actually entail). I left straight away and headed to the healthfood store.

There I bought two heaping bags of herbs all the while thinking the hippie girls behind the counter knew what I was up to. I had brought a couple herbal recipes in my bag with me (a gift from a friend who did a workshop on women's issues) in the event of the clinic test being positive. I knew that I needed to get started as soon as possible. unfortunately this healthfood store didn't carry the third herb to complete the equation. I had thought to just leave it out, the two I had already were very potent by themselves, but I wanted to follow everything to a T to (hopefully) ensure accuracy.

so I had to call around to other shops to find it. Surprisingly I stumbled across this tiny little herb shop downtown. It was in a cozy little room with worn cupboards full of glass bottles of herbs and cats lying on shelves. I approached the woman behind the counter with stacks of paper and well used books surrounding her tiny frame. she peered at me over her round glasses and I spilled my questions to her. I was using the "I have this friend who needs help" obvious faux second person bullshit. I showed her the recipe and she expressed a lot of concern. " a lot of these recipes are designed by, excuse me if this offends you, christians, and do not work," she told me. "that doesn't offend me," I smirked, "this recipe was taken from an anarchist women's herbal health manual." After we cleared away a lot of my questions and concerns and hers also, she gave me the herb, wished me and my 'friend' luck, and told me if it worked to stop back in with the recipe so she could share it with others.

I came home and immediately began boiling the concoction. the thing was, I was nervous and scared, yet also a bit excited to have found the ingredients. You see, I live in a VERY conservative city where it is difficult to find resources for this kind of thing. it seems it is just now catching on to alternative methods of health and diet and something as simple as a good herb shop is hard to find. Before I had decided to do this I wanted to ask questions to someone who maybe had tried this before, or new something about it. I thought to call local midwives, talk to women healthfood store owners and herb shops. yeah, the woman at the shop helped me with the knowledge of what these herbs do by themselves but she had never known anyone to try this before. she expressed more of a mother's judgement than anything. like the 'reckless teenager' who got pregnant and thinks she can will it away with simply drinking tea and never again think of the consequences. this is what prohibited me from calling any of the other places. sure, they had heard about herbal abortions but none had ever experienced it or known anyone who had. it was like an old folklore, something unattainable in this day and age, even amongst those circles.

I had also thought to call old friends far away whom I knew were skilled in herbs and possibly had tried this before or definitely knew someone who had. the circles of punk women are woven much tighter and reject christian medicine on many more levels than it seemed the healthfood store hippies I came across did. I knew this all along but chickened out from calling those I hadn't talked to in years with a "hey how's it going? oh by the way i'm pregnant can you give me some advice?" opening. I knew they would be more than willing to help but at this point I hadn't had enough energy to spill my guts and 'catch up' amongst other things. I didn't want concern or sympathy or anything that would make things any more scary and real than they already were. I just wanted to know the answers to my questions and end the conversation there and I knew that wouldn't fly too well. so... it was just me in the end.

I drank the tea like it was the vitamins of life. RELIGIOUSLY. every three to four hours. I took hot baths with oils, massaged my abdomen, loaded up on Vitamin C, and cried a lot, all the while thinking of nothing else but bleeding it all out. all of my energy and concentration went to expelling this fetus. it was easily the most terrifying, draining, and deeply sad thing I have ever been through. even though I had a lot of support by the few people that knew, I felt more alone than ever. the only solace I could squeeze was in the books I read, the biggest help being Cunt by Inga Muscio.

This book, Cunt, should be in *every* woman's library. it is easily the most informative, personal, and realistic book I have ever read on the subject of women, sexuality, and healing. it, in many ways, is my bible and her chapter on her own account of herbal abortion I read over and over during that time for support. I used her methods of 'imaging' to help me along. "many women I know have tried to induce miscarriage and failed because they took certain herbal potions and went about their lives as if everything were normal, waiting for the herbs to work their wonders. to successfully induce miscarriage, one must devote One's Entire Life to the attainment of this goal. *I place an enormous amount of*

emphasis on this point. when I induced miscarriage, I breathed, ate, shat, and slept thinking of nothing else but the lining of my uterus shedding." (cunt pg. 61). like I said, I did just that.

but I wondered how *couldn't* I think of this and only this. it consumed me like nothing else. I was afraid maybe I wasn't 'imaging' *enough,* maybe it wouldn't work, or worse, maybe it would be an 'incomplete miscarriage'. being the hypochondriac that I am I was terrified that it wouldn't all exit my body and I would be left with a potentially deadly infection. I read about all the symptoms of incomplete miscarriage and hoped to hell that everything would work in my favor.

I began bleeding on the third day. At first I was elated. I couldn't believe that it was happening. I rested a lot that day and took care of myself, recording it all in a journal I had started the first day I began the procedure. but the thing was that I wasn't bleeding much at all with just mild cramping also. I read again the symptoms of an incomplete miscarriage and I began to worry because they seemed so in sync with what I was experiencing. my mind was so exhausted yet overrun with horrible thoughts that I felt I was going crazy and that I might die of a horrible infection. I called a women's clinic to ask about what I should do if I thought I was miscarrying and they told me to go to the emergency room. well fuck that! it was out of the question. I was doing my best to avoid that result. so instead I decided to wait it out and see what happened.

to not know what is going on in your own body is horrific. I didn't know and I didn't know *how* to relax about it either. I was overcome with extreme paranoia and fear that something may go terribly wrong. I guess subconsciously I thought I wouldn't be able to handle it on my own and here it was and I still didn't believe it. days passed with little to no bleeding until it stopped all together. I kept thinking about how any kind of infection could take up to a week to show signs and in my fucked up state of mind I thought I would rather land in the hospital with that rather than go get checked out before.

well, I never went to any hospital. I felt perfectly fine (except for extreme exhaustion and depression for what I put myself through emotionally). I decided to go get another free test done a week later just to ease my conscious and it was negative. I was shocked honestly. I talked to the woman who gave me my result about what had happened and she assured me that I was no longer pregnant. I left the clinic kind of dazed and certainly relieved. it was over and yet strangely it didn't seem like it ever really happened. I got to thinking about how I didn't have that concrete realization of the abortion clinic and the horrific, cold procedure I had heard about there. I didn't have the vacuum and a doctor, a stranger/nurse holding my hand, the recovery pain and blood, and the enormous bills I wouldn't be able to afford. I was brought up in this society where a stranger is trusted with our bodies to "treat" everything under the sun, from minor colds to unwanted pregnancy. we are taught that medicine concocted in chemical labs with myriads of side effects heal all ailments, and if that doesn't work then surgery surely will. I realized afterward that because I didn't have a piece of paper or a prescription bottle in my name that it was just a dream, that I wasn't pregnant at all in the first place, and that I didn't spend weeks of my life shut off from the world and praying that I could do this on my own.

I look back at that recent time and I am overwhelmed with so many different emotions. on one hand I opened a new door in a sense, a confidence and power to take control of a situation my body is dealing with and healing it or changing it on my own. it feels truly liberating. then on the other hand I am overcome with the sense of panic I went through, of being naive and not knowing what the hell I was doing. talking to my mom about it, she tells me she thinks what I did must've been even more terrifying than going to a clinic. it is the difference between setting an appointment and having it 'taken care of' and the thoughts surrounding essentially extinguished in a matter of days. *or* performing an herbal abortion where the thoughts consume you every breathing second and the waiting period can be utterly excruciating.

I also feel an undeniable sadness for what I have done. I mean, I knew for sure that I couldn't have a child at this point in my life. yet, to feel the body changing and preparing for life is a pretty remarkable experience. I wasn't even aware that a woman can feel these changes as early as a few weeks to a month pregnant. my mother said she noticed my skin had a glow about it when I told her the news. my body felt unknown to me, senses and emotions acute. that glow and resilience that people speak of when they talk about pregnant women is not just a myth. if my mind wasn't riddled with the thoughts of not going through with this I would've basked in the beauty of it. maybe someday I'll choose to have the chance to feel it for the wonderful thing that it is.

and that was it. I don't think I can truly express the terror I went through into words for this. I am afraid I may have made it seem easy. and maybe it *is* easy for someone else. everyone is different and no two women will experience the same physically and/or emotionally about it. looking back, there are things I know I could've done differently. wanting to wait to see if maybe I would land in the hospital with a deadly infection rather than getting checked out before, is absurd and dangerous. I am all for natural healing but some things are much larger and serious than we can handle on our own. like I said, I feel extremely lucky to have had the outcome I have. I can say I have never learned so much about miracles of the mind and it's healing powers, and equally the evils and negativity it can possess also. oh, and the herbs, they help too. :)

-molliehatchet/Two Tears in a Bucket Zine

CONTAGION

The other dancers warned me, "Be careful, it's catching." One of the 12 women at the small club where I worked had gotten pregnant. "I'll be fine. I know my body." I'd been using natural birth control for 5 years and had never gotten pregnant. And, of course, I didn't believe any pregnancy could really be contagious. Diana, a woman who had been dancing for 10 years said, "Sugar, I'm serious. I've never seen just one woman in a club get pregnant. At least 3 dancers catch it every time." And the next week, as if answering her own prediction, she found out she was pregnant. I was still sure it wouldn't happen to me. Then another dancer caught it. I was the only one left not on the pill or Depo Prevera. I didn't do anything different that month but apparently my body wanted to jump on the procreation train because before I was even late, the other girls said, "You've got it." My breasts were a full cup size bigger and I had a little belly pooching out. "I'm not even late yet," I replied. Then I started feeling crazy. One morning, I threw up. Still not late, I decided to take the test. Positive. All the women at the club who were not chemically regulated got pregnant. Two decided to have their babies and one miscarried. I decided on the other route and made my appointment. I had to wait a few weeks since I caught it so early. While I waited, I tried parsley and vitamin C, both of which had brought on my period before. No luck. My body meant to keep it.

Finally the day came. We drove by the protestors and I went inside. Everyone in the lobby was morose as they watched Jerry Springer on the television while filling out the paperwork. I'm not sure why the talk shows were on. Maybe to show what can happen when there are too many humans.

Eventually it was my turn. The procedure was surprisingly easy since a friend had warned me to opt for the intra-venous pain killer they offer at the clinic. Seeing the women in the recovery room who didn't get it convinced me this was the best way. Those women were distraught; many were crying. The other women just looked relieved. The nurses wheeled me in and shot me up. I chatted with one nurse I knew for about 5 minutes and then it was over. I couldn't believe that was it.

Then came the more painful part. A doctor talked to me afterwards and filled out the prescription for pain killers (you get about 3 or 4) and a prescription for birth control pills. I had written on my history that I had used a condom and it broke. I'm not stupid. I know they would read "fertility awareness" as "withdrawal" and give me a hard time. I told her I used condoms and would not be taking the pill. She snidely commented, "I guess you're just not going to have sex, then." Despite the nice opiate induced feeling I had, I was livid. I told her I had no intention of making my body think it was pregnant all the time, thereby feeling as crazy as I'd felt that month for the rest of my life. She said, "I'm on the pill and I'm not crazy." I told her I didn't know her well enough to verify that. She begrudgingly let me leave without the free samples. Thinking of all the other women who go there and have the pill forced on them when they're already feeling shitty made me want to scream. To be in that headspace and then to have the doctor insult you for even questioning the pill is inexcusable. Luckily for me, I already had my mind made up enough to fight off her condescension.

I went home and went to sleep. Eventually, I took a painkiller. I was worried I wouldn't be able to work for a while because of the no tampon rule. But I didn't bleed much and the next day I felt well enough to go back to work. I even saved my painkillers

After a month, my hormone levels went back to normal. I wasn't bothered by the sight of babies or anything like that. Almost the worst part was the no sex for a month rule. I went back for my check-up and made a complaint against the doctor. Overall it was easy. Sometimes I think it might have been too easy. It was like having a cyst removed or something. I'm all for women doing whatever they want with their bodies, but I think some kind of acknowledgement is important. If we could have a system where we deal with it in our own communities, I'm sure we would develop ways of taking care of the problem but still admitting a loss. The clinical atmosphere creates a sense of detachment, almost like it's happening to someone else.

by Janet of
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.i was alwaysone of those pro-choice girls who said "i could never have one myself..."

standing in the bathroom, my pants halfway pulled up, staring at the little white stick already bright pink, *yep yer pregnant.* i never thought of it as a baby really, i saw it as something inside of me that might turn into one if i could nurture it right. i saw it as a parasite feeding off me, everything i put in my body, everything i came into contact with, this thing just kept on growing...pregnancy is being conscious of every bite of food, every one whose smoke you breathe in, every time you move. there's this little thing, this little monster in you gobbling up your insides and consuming all your emothions and energy. pregnancy is being so hungry and weak in the mornings that you get dizzy and fall on the way to the bathroom. no sudden movements, girls. there was no fucking way i could keep it. this thing. im 20 years old, i have no fucken money and i can not give a child the life it deserves. the emotional attention i cant even give myself. idont know why i even feel the need to justify myself...uh.yeah. so i fuckin got an abortion. i went and had my insides sucked out with a hose. sat in a room with 13 other women, none of us talking. me staring at all of them and reading people magazines. called into the back so many times. urine sample. blood test. pelvic exam. counselor lady who made me cry. she asked me had i considered other options - no - why not. couldnt stop crying. nobody had asked me that, no matter how many people i talked to. i just kept saying "i just cant" over and over. my mom. money. this poisoned earth. the fuckin life i want... she gave me some valium andi read about the house drew barrymore bought herself recently as it sunk in. the actual procedure took two to three minutes and was over before i realized it.

really the five hours i spent in that waiting room were the fuckin hardest of my life. i kept telling myself "just keep sitting here dont do anything just be dead and theyll do it and itll all be over. you dont have to do anything itll all be fixed dont think just be dead." came home, slept. laid in bed, still dead. stumble through the days dead. dream of babies. dream of giving birth, wake up dead. i know this is all going to hit me someday. hit me so hard. right now im just working on keeping myself alive.

three years later, i remember certain things about the experience. how fuckin good the grape juice and cookies i ate in the recovery room tasted. how sunburned i got when i hitchhiked across the state thanks to that medication they give you. the woman who held my hand being the kindest person i had talked to in a long time.

two years after i had the abortion, i found myself looking at another pink spot on a white stick. the situation was completely different. somehow, something was telling me that this was my baby. when my daughter was a few days old, i laid in bed with her, nursing, sobbing. overwhelmed with grief and the presence so strong of who could have been. i have dreams of this one, my older child, my daughter's big brother.

in no way do i regret having an abortion, but i have so much grief surrounding it that i don't know what to do with. i ignore it. i have felt ostracized in my community for choosing to have a child, and i feel awkward in my new community of mothers talking about the abortion. if anyone has gone thru this i would love to hear from you!

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The first time I got pregnant I had just turned 21 and it was kind of a crazy situation. I was in love with one guy but I went off to have an affair with an ex-boyfriend who was not a nice person and I think he got me pregnant on purpose. It was a terrible mistake. We had a really bad dynamic and he was upset I had left him. I lived in Ashland among hippies, and everyone I knew had babies and toddlers. I hadn't thought it through well, but liked the idea of having a baby girl of my own. So I was open to pregnancy, and wasn't good about birth control. When I realized I was pregnant it was the day I admitted what a mistake it had been to visit my ex. My boyfriend I liked had ditched me while I was away for another woman. It was the first time I got my heart broken; I was devastated, and then realized I was pregnant in the midst of my tears. It was bad timing, but my assumption was that I would have the baby. I thought maybe I'd give it up for adoption, but I didn't really know how to go about it. . No one around me liked that idea, and the lame-o ex said he and his parents would sue for the baby if I did that. I hated him and his family, and was scared of that possibility. In a way I think I am a sad that I didn't do that though. Later I met a woman who had done that and I felt envious. She met a dozen families who were really eager to have it, and she chose the one she liked best. They set up an agreement about when he is to be told, etc. But it seemed very old fashioned right then, and no one I knew had any experience with it. I wonder if the availability of abortion has created a backlash against doing that. If you're not going to have a baby, people seem to think you shouldn't walk around being pregnant. Also, I wasn't totally conscious of this right then, but I think that I was not nearly as afraid of childbirth as I was of abortion, though anyone who's had both will laugh at that. Surgery totally freaks me out! So when I acquiesced that I couldn't give the baby up, I decided I would raise it. All my friends had babies. I was in a woman's circle and I told them and they were completely excited; telling me what a great mommy I'd be. My guy friends flipped through "what to name the baby" books. Everyone around me was very supportive.

There was an older lesbian couple, however, who were friends of mine who had a bookstore in back of the cooperative artists space where I worked, and it was one of them who was the first to talk sense to me. Her partner was excited about it, but then Jennie came in. She was kind of a sexy butch dyke and she turned to me and said, ***"A baby! What are you, crazy!? You're 21 years old, you're single, you don't have any money, You live in your truck!"*** Another friend of mine had said I could move in with her and we could be welfare moms together. But Jennie told me that that would suck. She'd been the product of unprepared parents, and ended up being an orphan and having a hard young life and she didn't romanticize this kind of thing. She was the first person who had seemed to look clearly at the whole picture, and I went home to my truck and was awake all night thinking. I tried to picture having a baby more clearly; to think about where I would live, and what it would be like to travel and do all the things I usually did. There was so, so much I wanted to do and I knew a lot of single moms and how full on their realities were. I knew I would resent the child for taking away my precious freedom, and I realized that my fear of abortion was a big factor in my decision, and I knew that wasn't totally reasonable. In the back of my mind I think I knew it was coming. IN retrospect perhaps I should have gone the adoption route, but I know that would have been hard in it's own way, my family, too, was shocked by that idea. Also, the world is

so overpopulated, and I was afraid of having a kid from two parents that literally couldn't stand to be in the same room with each other. It really disturbed me to think of this poor child trying to reconcile the oil and water parts of itself, no matter who it grew up with.

I realized I'd have to face my fear. So I called my mom and told her and she was eager to help me, and I went to see her in the city and did it there. I was terrified and at the nice women's clinic when they told me the details of the procedure, I passed out. I couldn't believe I was going to do it; I was in a daze of terror all day. The actual experience of the abortion was nothing at all compared to that fear. It was a nice place with women doctors and there was a volunteer to talk to me. I was 9 weeks pregnant, I'd gotten to the point where it was hard to eat, and when I went home I was immediately hungry, it was surprising how sudden the results were.

After that I was traumatized and lived in fear of getting pregnant. I read a lot about herbal abortion, and got "The Herbal Abortion Handbook" and "Hot Pantz" and became dogmatic about the idea that surgical abortion was something that had been foisted onto women. I thought that herbal abortion or various massage techniques were the way to go. I think I also still had feelings about having had the first abortion, that I wished that I had given it up for adoption or just had more options. I didn't feel like I'd had enough choices.

I got pregnant again 6 years later, with my partner who I plan to be with forever. We were very much in love so it was a different situation. I had all this information and in the intervening years if my period was late and I was concerned I'd do various things like place vitamin C up my cunt or take herbs. I'd had a couple of scares. I kept good track of my periods and then it happened that my period was late and I wasn't thinking in terms of being pregnant, but rather that I had a late period. So I began taking various herbs. A few days went by and my cycle isn't completely regular, so I wasn't sure, but then it was really late and I got a test and was pregnant. I called up midwives and everyone I could think of asking for advice on what herbs I should be taking. I was trying to use "The Herbal Abortion Handbook" but now I realized how many options it gave and how hard it was to actually create a plan with it. A friend directed me to a herbalist who was new, and hadn't observed it done, but had reports on what worked and a recipe. We started trying huge amounts of osha and blue and black cohosh and a couple others. She said "The Herbal Abortion Handbook" amounts were too low to do anything. I say we because after I started she realized she was pregnant too, and actually a bit further on than me, so she took them too! We spent a lot of time on the phone. Both of us became housebound after we started taking the herbs.

Almost immediately I felt awful and nauseous. I took herbs for about three days and she was telling me to pace myself, not to get too nauseated by the taste and to drink sweet things like juice with them. But after a few days I felt constantly like I was on the verge of puking. I couldn't do it: I had to stop taking the herbs but the feelings of sickness went on for over a week.

This was a turning point in my life, I was sick and wretched and I realized for the first time how lucky we are to have abortion and other surgeries available to us. I realized if we didn't, I'd have had to keep taking these herbs, doing god knows what to my body and organs. At that point I didn't have the option to consider having a baby; I'd been poisoning myself from day one and so I just couldn't consider it, I had to go forward. I was really grateful that in Oregon abortion is on the

public health plan so it was paid for. I was grateful and it was such a different experience. I pretty much passed out again in the office. They did this thing where they put seaweed into the cervix and I liked the idea but my body freaked out. They put it in and I had to wait a couple hours and I was on the verge of passing out; I had to be propped up the whole time. My partner was there with me, stroking my hair and holding my hand, telling me about mountain meadows full of blooming lupines during the procedure. Also I told the doctor that I trusted her and I didn't want them to tell me the steps as they went. I just shut my eyes and didn't think about it and that made it much better for me.

Both experiences of getting pregnant were life-changing moments. Both times it was a precursor to big changes in my life. The first time I'd been such a hippie and was happy, and being pregnant changed me. I had thought that things happen the way they are meant to, you plant seeds and let them grow. It was really jarring and I became more aggressive and angry and proactive after the abortion; my whole perspective changed. I became more political and realistic. The second time because I spent so much time laid up sick I ended up quitting my environmentalist job and altering course of my life. In a way it can seem so simple; your period is late, but it is really such a big psychic event.

Both times I was in Southern Oregon and the support was really around having kids. So when I got an abortion there wasn't much to say. I've heard some stories of women who have women's circles and rituals around it. My sister knows a woman who had an abortion then got a tattoo on her belly; she plans on having kids someday and when her belly gets big her tattoo will grow. The first time I was so distraught that I didn't really have it in me to do much. ***The one thing I did do was make a black doll who was kind of strange looking called Mymble, which was what I imagined I'd name my daughter.*** It was sort of a lonely, isolated thing to do, but that's how I felt right then. My sister got really attached to the doll and I gave it to her later because she liked it so much. She still has her and she made an artist book with her. The second time I wasn't eager to tell people because it is such a pretty baby centric community, and I knew that people wouldn't understand why I didn't want to be a mother, like them. Having a child can be really hard, but it does draw people together, whereas abortion seems like something you go through by yourself or with your partner or family members, if you're lucky. People say that about birth too, though; that you have a midwife, a doula, your partner, friends; but that the horrifying part is that really, you do it alone and it is phenomenally intense. Ironically now I have step-kids who were born when my partner was the same age I was for each abortion. They are the same ages apart as my children would be. I have this feeling of karma, because sometimes I've thought I didn't want step-kids and wondered what they have to do with me, but then I realize these are like my ghost children.

Amber

The A word

Indeed we must de-stigmatize such an important and extremely common women's issue as abortion. So many women I've talked to have been through it. I felt compelled to write my story because I don't want women to have that impending feeling of doom and shame and negativity that always surrounds the issue of abortion. Contrary to the popular pro-lifer belief, I prefer to think of it as saving lives; particularly my own.

I had the day circled in red in my day-planner. I didn't dread it, but I wasn't looking forward to it either. The most stressful thing about that looming date was not the physical pain or the post traumatic stress I'd heard was impending, but the shame I couldn't help but experience because of popular cultural opinion. I'd put myself in a position that people view as irresponsible and careless. I was neither irresponsible nor careless, and hated that I'd been conditioned to feel such shame for something I knew I'd done everything I could to prevent. I knew I wasn't ready to give a child the kind of life and family that I wanted to, and it was as simple as that. I knew I had the right to decide. I was sure that I was sparing a whole lotta people a whole lotta heartache, not just myself. I wanted it to be a planned and beautiful experience, and not with someone with whom I was literally planning to break-up with. I wanted it to be real. This wasn't real. It was too soon and too scary. So I made the obvious choice. I felt well informed, well educated, well versed on all the reasonings, and well armed with all the arguments with which to defend myself. Why had this shadow of shame come about? I was raised with the most supportive, empowering, and liberal family-life. I went to an alternative elementary open classroom, and a private Quaker school after that... I traveled extensively, and felt very worldly and wise as a kid. Then, in college, I was dating this boy, I think we were in the 7th or 8th month and it was clearly on the rocks. So I was just about to end it, when I found out I was pregnant. It was a surreal couple of weeks before I was able to make the appointment. I broke up with the boy, and remember clearly all those strange sensations... sensitive breasts, slight nausea, especially in the morning, and very strange dreams. I was very clear-headed about what I needed to do, and tried very hard to expel any guilt or insecurities about that decision.

I had the unique experience of going to the clinic that day with a boy I used to date. A boy I lived with, actually, for two years. We had been friends for a few years since our mutual break-up, and I know he came along because he truly cared about me. He gave me such faith in the post-break-up friendship. His support had zero ulterior motives. He was not an obligated boyfriend, he was in no way responsible or uncomfortable or freaked out by the idea that I was doing this. He sat with me in the waiting room and in the recovery room afterwards he held my hand. He was there because I needed him. Right before he left he said "You are the strongest woman I know".

I expected that the mental anguish would come eventually, but it never did. I am satisfied to this day that I made the right decision, and am so looking forward to that incredible day when I will give birth to my own child, be it with someone I love or going at it alone, I will be ready.

BY TAMARA GOLDSMITH

merrydeath,

my abortion was not one before roe vs. wade, nor did it cause any unreversable medical problems. it was safe, performed by someone who has practiced for 20 years, and i am so very thankful for that.

my experience lasted 2 weeks, from the time when i got my positive pregnancy test reading to when i got the abortion. but it lasted a lot longer thsn that. it lasted throughout the month prior, when my body started changing, my tummy started getting larger, and me too depressed and stressed to deal with anything. especially a pregnancy.

the mood swings, and morning sickness, and nausea all day leade me to drop out of school, to go back "home" and deal with my problems in a setting not conducive to pulling your hair out with stress.

i didnt tell the people i was living with until after the fact. but i basically told everyone else. friends, my mom, boys, random people who hassled me. and the response i got was one of openness, of understanding. my mothers response was "that happened to me my first semester at college, too." and i couldnt believe it. i couldnt believe how wonderful and supporting people were.

i started looking at women differently, started looking at myself differently. i started valuing my relationships with women so much more. i started learning about abortion, and realizing all the things no one had told me, no one had taught me. and i fealt responsible, because here i was. a [redacted] woman and i had only just started learning and realizing [redacted] my body. i had only begun to grasp the importance of it.

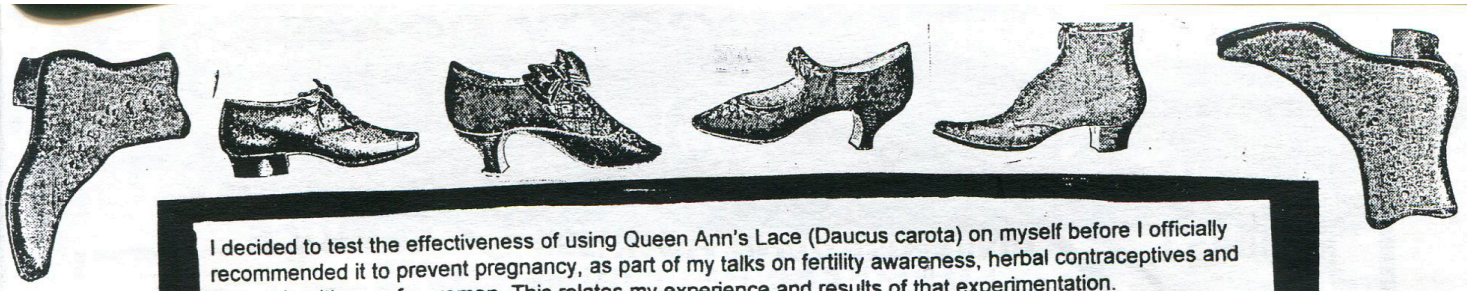
my experience lasted another month in which for half of it i could not swi or submerge my body into water because of the orders fo the doctor. and it was a month of waiting, and hoping that the p ocedure had not failed and that i was not st ll pregnant - even though i knew i wasnt, there was still a fear.

in this month i had starting researching womens health, and took part in a womens health independent study project, gave a womens health workshop at a conference for younger women and men and decided that when the new moon came i would bring on my period. using herbs... it took one large glass of tea and i was menstruatin with so much joy. because of the close contact i had with [redacted] my friendship group we all started menstuating on the same cycle, and we had a menstruation party. i wore red.

and this was only a month ago, my period has come agian, and on the new moon with all of these beautiful women, and we heald a womans tea party for all the rad women we could think to invite.

and my experience still last through today, because it became a realization and a self awareness,. it brought a responsibility to myself, to take control of my own body, to understand it, and love it.it finally made me realize that i am a woman.

-sarah sky



Queen Anne's lace

implantation inhibitor

I decided to test the effectiveness of using Queen Ann's Lace (Daucus carota) on myself before I officially recommended it to prevent pregnancy, as part of my talks on fertility awareness, herbal contraceptives and natural health care for women. This relates my experience and results of that experimentation.

I was armed with the directions: "chew 1 teaspoon of QAL seeds with plenty of water each day from ovulation (and unprotected sex) for 2 weeks or until menses starts", found in several sources.

My QAL experiment lasted 6 months, in which I definitely put myself at risk for pregnancy by having unprotected sex when fertile. A couple times I had the sensation or impression that conception had indeed taken place.

I didn't keep a daily diary of the process, but kept random notes. Several times, I stretched or pushed the perimeters of the treatment protocol a bit. These deviations in dosage or timing had no affect on the final outcome meaning no pregnancies resulted. Although I highly recommend following the treatment protocol as carefully as possible, here is the list of monthly procedures including those deviations and results:

For 3 cycles - took QAL 1 tsp. daily, from day of unprotected intercourse while fertile, until menses started at its normal expected time, 2 - 21/2 weeks later. (Success, no pregnancy)

One cycle - waited 3 days after unprotected intercourse before beginning QAL. (Success, no pregnancy)

One cycle - took QAL for two weeks, stopping before menses began. Got period 4 days later. (Success, no pregnancy)

One cycle - I skipped a couple days in the middle of the treatment, then resumed taking QAL. (Success, no pregnancy)

The first time trying QAL, I mistakenly took a dosage of 1 tablespoon per day for a week, which gave me diarrhea.

Note: I recommend that QAL dosage be taken during the day, between meals on an empty stomach to be most effective.

The Queen Anne's Lace seeds taken should also have a fresh odor, be from a reputable dealer, or gathered in an undisturbed area far from people and chemical sprays, car exhaust. The supply should not be older than 1 year (lasts years harvest ok until this years harvest comes). They should have a strong fresh menthol-ish flavor when chewed, releasing the volatile oils.

Though I was very pleased with the positive outcome and effectiveness of the QAL trial, I was happy to end my experiment. The estrogenic effects of QAL eventually played havoc with my hormonal balance and made me feel a bit sickly near the end, somewhat bloated and I gained weight. I experienced more cramping, and premenstrual symptoms earlier than usual before my period came while taking QAL. This was more apparent in cycles 4, 5 & 6 so it was due to accumulative effects. Because of this, I can't advocate using QAL on a daily basis all year long, as the women in the Appalachian culture practice.

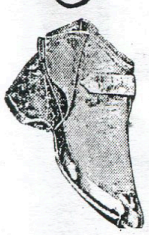
As for the experiment itself, it was emotionally exhausting to worry about the consequences of purposely putting myself at risk of pregnancy each month, though I had confidence in the seeds. I was glad to go back to my normal birth control method of fertility charting, abstinence and occasional condoms!

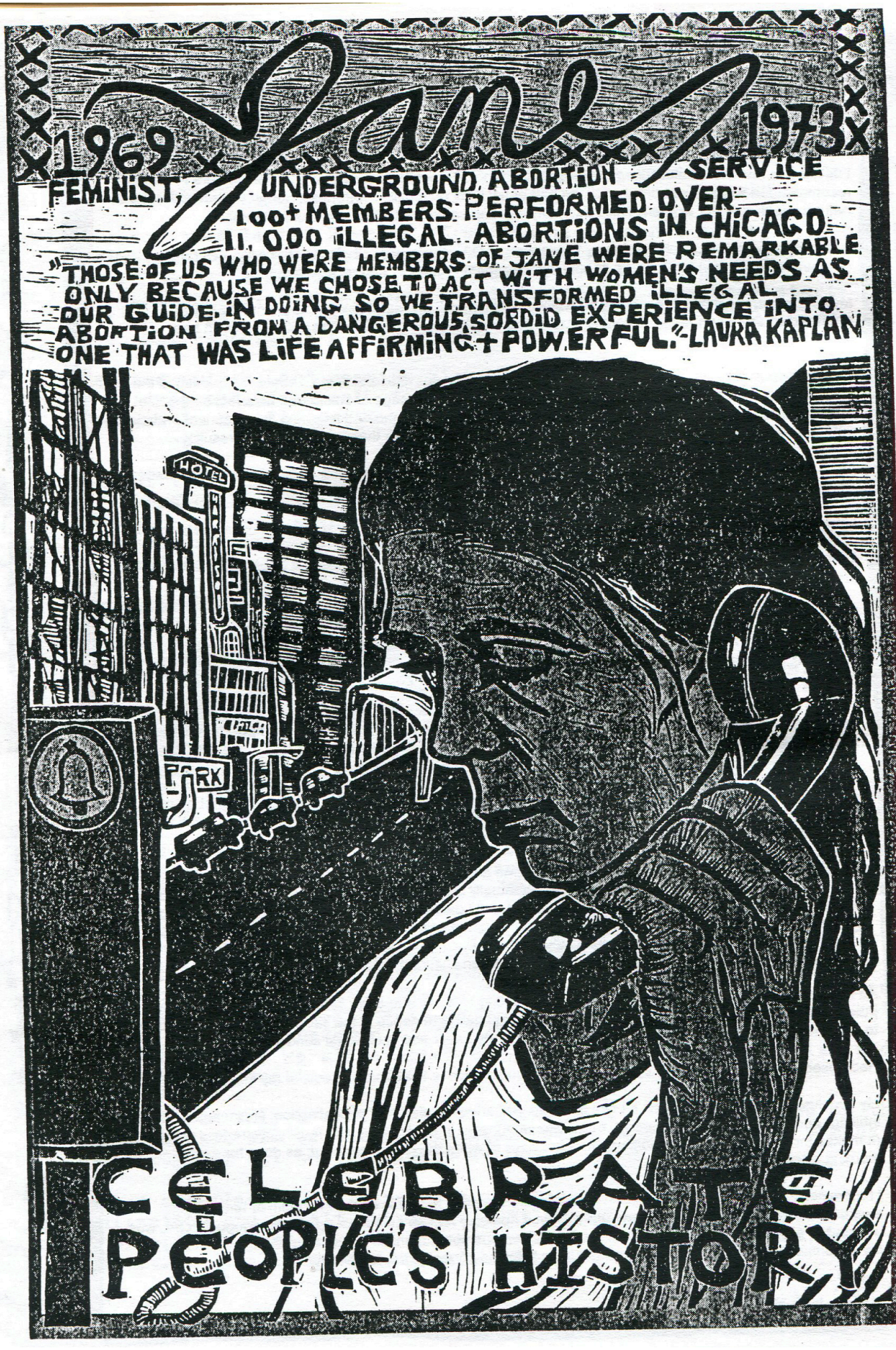
Had I used QAL only one or two cycles, I probably would have not felt any ill effects to my health.

My conclusion is that Queen Anne's Lace is a safe and effective disruptor of conception, implantation inhibitor and emergency contraceptive, especially when used in conjunction with fertility awareness practices. (It makes most sense for those women who are aware of when they have ovulated, as does for every morning after treatment!!).

I recommend it as a morning after, or emergency contraception to use in case of condom or fertility awareness failure. I would recommend the vitamin c / parsley regime as a back up emmenogogue if QAL was not started early enough or other failure made one nervous about menses not coming, though according to my experiment, if the QAL treatment procedure is followed correctly, this is unlikely .

BY: NANXI, NOMAD6RRL





Print: Merry death

25

a fisher's tale

I knew the exact moment I got pregnant. It was the exact moment that I began to deny reality. I was traveling, showing my hometown to my boyfriend for a few days. My boyfriend of the time was sick himself; crazy, he said. I was the strong one. Instead of calling around for a Morning After pill, I firmly decided that I wasn't pregnant.

I couldn't be pregnant. It was spring, time for me to return to my life as a commercial fisherwoman in the Kodiak, Alaska salmon industry. Nothing would hold me back. I'd had nightmares before this of being pregnant before fishing season; this was not to be.

So yeah, I guess it was my own fault. I have been so angry for so long that it is hard to accept responsibility, judge the foolish way I acted, see the things I could have done that would have made things easier in the end for me and for everyone. It was hard also to reach back over the years and tell that angry girl I used to be that it was OK, that it wasn't entirely my fault that I didn't know a single thing about women's health beyond a vague idea that I should get a checkup every year. It wasn't my fault that abortion has always been a loaded issue in America. I was only one young woman among thousands in history who waited, who felt powerless before the actions of her body. That powerlessness infected me, affected every decision I made.

By the time I arrived in Kodiak, I had skipped my period, but I still refused to understand that I was pregnant; getting neighborly with the ocean always yanked my cycle around some. I got a spring 4-day halibut job on the Lucky Pierre while I asked around for a 4-month salmon job. At that point I split into two distinct people. I became Moe who knew she was pregnant and Moe who wasn't' pregnant.

I had never in 6 years of fishing been seasick. I was nauseous and throwing up the whole 30 hours we were out on the grounds. The taste of coffee changed, it felt wrong in my mouth. I couldn't drink it, it was like drinking metal. Nobody said anything about the nausea—everyone's seasick their first trip out—but a fisherman who didn't drink coffee? I kept trying, a few sips, a grimace, then overboard.

I kept my fears secret. Salmon season started and I got a job, skiffing for a guy my sister had worked with the previous 5 years, a good boat, good guy. I liked him, Allen Peterson. He hired two 19-year-old boys from Indiana. "Little guys," Allen said, "They'll fit in the bunks good."

The skiff engine failed during the first weeks of the season. In my experience, no skipper ever forgets who was driving his equipment when it breaks, especially if it costs 7 thousand dollars to replace. I couldn't bear the thought of telling Allen that I was pregnant on top of that. My sister turned up pregnant the previous summer while she was working for him and I was chagrined to be in the same boat, so to speak. Though I had finally worked up the nerve to purchase a pregnancy test at the drugstore when we were in town on a repair trip, I didn't actually take the test until we were BACK out on the fishing grounds. Towards the end of my wheel watch, as we approached Malina Light, I pissed n the cup and watched it instantly indicate my condition. The Moe who wasn't pregnant was furious; the Moe who knew just sat and cried silently until Allen crawled out of his bunk to fish. He looked at me. "What's wrong?"

"Allen" I croaked, "I'm pregnant."

"What!" He blew up. "Why didn't you find out while we were still in town! Why did you wait until we were al the way out here! What's wrong with your family!" and other such things. He took the wheel and slowed the boat.

I couldn't stand it. I couldn't admit that I didn't take the test in town because I was scared it would be positive, and then I would have to do something about it. Then it would be real. I crawled into my bunk, unable to bear that I was being yelled at after I had gotten possible the worst news of my life.

"You're not going back to sleep now are you! We're here to fish!" Allen hollered into the fo'c'sle.

"No!" I yelled back from under my sleeping bag. "I'm crying!" After a few minutes of weeping and trying to mentally prepare for my first fishing experience as a pregnant person, I heard the rpms kick back up to traveling speed. I poked my head out f the bunk.

"We're going back to town so you can deal with this." Allen said, disgusted. I retreated into my bunk and cried and slept for another 5 hours or so. During that time one of the Hoosiers, Nate, emerged from the bunk. "Moe's pregnant and we're going back to town." Allen told him.

"Oh." Nate went out on deck, pissed over the rail, and went back to the bunk

The other Hoosier, Ben, never even woke up. Went to sleep at the dock and 10 hours later crawled out of his bunk, still at the dock. "Oh." He said, when I told him the situation. 19-year-old deckhands don't have much to say to despondent pregnant skiffwomen who aren't their girlfriends. Those poor boys lived with me at my worst, with my mood swings, my sleepiness, my hunger—I couldn't eat anything but crackers and ginger ale without throwing up. Once, when I caught one of them eating some saltines, I went OFF. "Those are MY crackers!" I barked. "That's all I can eat!" We bought the food together as crew, but I couldn't eat their food, pop tarts and Oreos and peanut m&ms. Still can't.

Another time we were traveling between fishing spots in a little bit of weather. I made a sudden rush out the door and hurled my guts over the side. I was clinging to the davit with the sea spraying up in my face when I looked up to see Ben standing there, holding out a glass of water for me. My heart broke at the tiny and unexpected crumb of kindness expressed.

Allen apologized to me for yelling at me right off the bat. I just took him off guard. We talked some. I told him I wanted to keep fishing. I had an idea that I'd take a day, have the procedure, go back out on the grounds. That's the way they did it, those tough guys, and I was one of them. "you don't have to have an abortion, you know." He smiled. "I don't mind a chubby skiffwoman." I smiled too, but shook my head, no no no baby for me.

Back in town, Allen and the guys started mending some of the ever-present holes in the net and Allen's wife Joanne took me to their house to try and find an abortion clinic. Both Allen and his wife had referred me to the local Crisis Pregnancy Center. I stared at them. "That place is a front! I said. They're anti -choice! Don't you know that! They're a national group! "The hospital on Kodiak is (or was at the time) a Methodist hospital; from local scuttlebutt I heard that many staff members were anti-choice. The only abortion provider for many years was a local boy who didn't give a shit what anybody said about him as a doctor because he had really wanted to be a piano player. His abortions cost $700 and required 3 days to complete. He had retired that April, so I needed to fly to the mainland. The yellow pages for the Kenai Peninsula offered 4 choices under the listing 'abortion.' I was calling on a Friday. The two private offices were both closed on Fridays. The clinic in Kenai required 3 days; I didn't know anyone in Kenai, didn't want to spend money on a motel, didn't know how I would get from Anchorage to Kenai. That left the Anchorage Women's Health Center. The clinic offered a one-day procedure for $470.00. The first available appointment was in three weeks. Joanne and I were shocked. We thought we would get to it that weekend. All I needed to do, the receptionist said, was to call and confirm my appointment the day before. Since my appointment was on a Monday, I would have to call the previous Friday.

"But I can't." I said, "I'll be fishing on Friday." She stated again the necessity of the confirmation, and I also restated that I would be otherwise engaged away from a telephone, In Kodiak, everyone makes allowances for fishing and fishermen. I was so accustomed to having my situation accommodated that I was truly stumped by this. Finally the receptionist lowered her voice.

"Look,: she said, "Some body has to call us on Friday and say, 'this is Moe, I am confirming my appointment on Monday. OK?"

A giant light bulb went off in my head. "Ohhh." I said. "Right." I hung up the phone, turned to Joanne and explained the situation. "Do you think you could call them for me?"

Joanne wouldn't do it. "What if they know it's not you? What if they find out it's me? I don't want to get in trouble." Tears stung my eyes and panic rose in my throat. This was the same woman who had driven all over town to find my sister's boyfriend when my sister discovered she was pregnant, and she couldn't make a phone call for me. Help, help, I needed help, and I was a long, long way from home.

Help arrived in the form of my friend Serena. She was a massage therapist who had grown up in Kodiak, and like every local, had done a little time in the fishing industry. She was housesitting in a big house, I could stay with her before and after the procedure, she would call and confirm at the clinic for me, she had lots of time to listen to and console me. She understood that I needed to make long phone calls and she made me delicious meals. Many others of my friends were terribly sweet to me, but most of the time they were out fishing.

The weeks leading up to the abortion were hard. Mostly I was lonely and alienated, inside and out. I felt like I had a bomb or something equally dangerous inside of me and I needed to expel it as quickly as possible before it affected me, changed me. I resisted with every inch of my person the idea and fact of my pregnancy. I was terrified, ignorant and I was surrounded by kind, confused men at whom I daily growled. I didn't feel like I could complain, since it was obviously trouble I had gotten my own self into, and I didn't know how to make myself feel better. Why I didn't get my ass to the library and fid some book or something to help me, I do not know. Why nobody else did either, I do not know. It may have helped me to understand that the mood swings were normal, there were things to eat and drink that could alleviate the morning sickness, but I just jutted out my jaw and counted the days. I was very prickly and radiated a strong Get The Fuck Back vibe. Oh, poor me. I can say that now, though had I tried to say something like that 8 years ago I would no doubt have bit my own head off.

The abortion was horrible, from the minute I left Serena's house. I had to fly alone, barely able to afford the $180 plane trip for myself, much less for a hand-holder. The plane almost didn't leave the island Sunday night, which threw me into an immediate panic. At the Anchorage airport I wandered the halls for a place to sleep, as a large man occupied the nursery couch. In the morning I fought with the Hindu cab driver about my destination—he didn't seem to want to take me to the clinic, to the point where I suspected that he was an anti-choice male chauvinist set on preventing my abortion. He drove me in silence after I finally lost my shit and screamed at him.

The clinic was locked when I arrived at 7:30 am; twenty minutes later it was packed with women. I filled out forms and handed over the $470 I had been carrying on my person since July 5th. When they called my name I was shuttled back and forth among the staff of clinic workers, all of who were female and a surprising number of whom were pregnant. The pushed and pulled me, bumped into me, gave me bad instructions, sat me down in front of an (they eventually located the missing tape) empty VCR (they eventually located the missing tape) so I could watch the 20 video explanation of the procedure that was the only description or counseling I would get that whole day, aside from the photocopied handout I clutched throughout my visit. Only once did one of the women introduce herself, Barbara the Midwife who did the ultrasound. No one asked my name. The phlebotomist stormed in, took two vials of blood and left without even looking at me, much less speaking to me. TVs blared Joan Rivers and Montel Williams in every waiting room. The room where I was to have the abortion was cold, the window open. A small radio on the floor provided the soundtrack—Smoke on the Water going into Rock and Roll Hoochie Koo. The abortionist was a man in stonewashed jeans, a pink Oxford shirt, white running shoes and a ponytail. Up to this point in my life I had only had female gynecologists; no man who was not my lover had ever touched my cunt, much less pried my cervix open while making repetitive small talk about what Alaskan town I was from and wasn't fishing hard. I was still angry from my fight with the cab driver, I was numbed and further alienated by the way I had been passed around the clinic all morning and when he dilated my cervix without preparing me I blew up.

"I've never had a man do an exam on me!" I wailed, "All my doctors have always told me exactly what they are doing when they are doing it!" and I cried. He stopped then, and began to explain the procedure, but it was too little too

late, and I knew it. I wept onto the paper sheets, furious. It had happened, I had let it happen. I had gotten hurt. I didn't have time to get ready for the pain. I felt like I had fallen into a ravine over which I had teetered for weeks. I sobbed out my rage to a clinic worker in the recovery room. She confirmed that it had been an unusually chaotic day. "A monkey fuck football game," she called it.

The cab ride back to the airport was great. I was sore and angry but I loved the driver. She was a revolutionary Yugoslavian woman counting the days she said, before civil war erupted in Alaska between the rich and the poor. She talked the whole way back to the airport, where I got a plan back to the island within 15 minutes and was back by 1 pm.

The next two days were grand. I felt free and happy. I wanted to take care of Serena the way she had taken care of me. I thought it was all going to be ok. Even the weather was nice.

The morning of the third day I woke up bathed in sweat from bad dreams. I had a fever. Scared, I called my boyfriend in Chicago. I woke up Serena, who rushed in naked when she heard the panic in my voice. I called the clinic in Anchorage as indicated on the handout—"One in 400 abortion cases results in infection. If you should experience fever, call the clinic." I got in a fight with a receptionist, who basically told me to get my ass to an emergency, and why did you call here, to which I basically responded, because that's what your lameass instructions instruct, fucker! Serena called one of her pals who worked in the local medical system; she advised any doctor but Smith. Because of his beliefs.

Serena took me to the hospital. I was a mess. When the nurse told us who the doctor was, I turned to Serena and cried, "Don't let him be mean to me!" Serena cradled me with one arm, grew two feet taller and told the surprised nurse that I had been through a very difficult experience and I was to be treated like a queen, do you hear me? She stayed with me through the exam, where it was confirmed that I had an infection, and only left when I was assigned a bed.

I got on an IV with 24 hours of antibiotics and slept most of the day. I had many visitors, all women with little girls in tow, bringing books and stuffed toys and flowers. Late in the afternoon of the next day I was released and went to stay at the home of a friend of Serena's. I didn't know her, but she lived in town, close to the store and the doctor's, and didn't mind me staying with her for a week.

The next day was my birthday. I finally reached my parents on the phone. I hadn't called anyone until I had gotten the fever, and I wanted to talk to everyone. "Do you know where we are?" my father's voice was tight and far away. "We're in the hospital, with your sister, who has had three suicide attempts!" I got off the phone.

A few friends came over to visit on my birthday, which was fun. Al the boats were in town for a fishing closure, so everyone got the news. Then they all went back out fishing and I stayed sick. I didn't know Serena's friend well enough to get her to cook for me and I was too sick to feed myself, so I just stayed in bed and took pain pills ever time I woke up. I hurt in a way I'd never hurt before, a pain that was buried somehow deep inside of me, that I couldn't pinpoint or locate.

Joanne accompanied me to Doctor and financial assistance visits, and worried at my listlessness. Allen visited, brought me peanut m&ms and a magazine, told me about the funny Brazilian guy they hired temporarily to fill my spot. I had heard from someone that a friend of Allen's had gone up and down the docks, asking all the boats if they knew of someone who needed a job. "Allen's skiffwoman got pregnant, then got an abortion and ended up with an infection so Allen needs a crewman."

It was a small town. Everyone knew my story. One woman whispered to me that she had heard Joanne at the marine supply store, telling the whole thing to anyone who cared to listen and it infuriated me. Looking back, I resent that woman who passed the gossip. Of course Joanne would have to blow off some steam, complain; I was causing her and her family a lot of problems. But Joanne was always kind to me, if not friendly, and she spent a lot of time making sure I did what I needed to do.

It was the sickest I had ever been. I could barely move, I was even paler than I normally am, then one day, it turned. I woke up animated and HUNGRY. My friend Toni's 16-year-old daughter heard I was sick and asked her mom if I could come stay with them until I got better. I moved in with them and this sped my

recovery. I was fed and included and left alone and taken care of the way I needed. It as great and I don't feel like I've thanked them enough, any of them. My last night before going back to work there was a big outdoor party. It was fun, but also strange. Lots of people came up to me, women and men, whom I barely knew or didn't know at all. "I've been there," the women murmured. "Sorry about your trouble," the men said, and patted my shoulder, squeezed my hand. I appreciated it very much, especially from the men, since many men, when I told them my woes responded with a typical fisherman's, "Poor Allen." And because I was a deckhand hoping to continue working in Kodiak, I had to nod and say, "yep." Thinking, Poor Allen? Poor me! Though I can now understand where they're coming from. I should have dealt with my situation as it came up, when it would have affected only me, instead of dragging my skipper, his wife and my crewmates along, not to mention all my friends.

The other thing about the sympathy, and everyone knowing, is that no one ever once mentioned that there were no abortions available on Kodiak. Two women whispered that the same thing had happened to them after they went to that same clinic, but no one ever said anything about how they really ought to get another abortionist in town. Just whispers and murmurs.

I danced that night, at the party. Decided I was fine, and kicked up my heels a little, circled round with a powerful local healer lady and knew everyone was watching, muttering, "I thought she was so sick...?" Immediately afterwards, I almost passed out in the shadows from the shuddering uterine contractions that swept through me. I didn't know what had happened, I still don't. I didn't tell anyone, for fear of what it might have meant.

I went fishing the next day. About a week later we were down the East Side doing pretty well. I had pulled the skiff alongside the boat to help roll a big bag of fish when suddenly I couldn't move. Something was wrong with my back. I spent the rest of that day alternately flat on my back in the skiff while Nate held the net to shore and then I would drop him off on the boat and tow the set around in great pain, while they brought the net on board. That night I hitched a ride into town on another boat, leaving my crew to 3-man it until the area closed in two days. I got to the cannery at low tide and struggled all the way up the ladder with my bag and bum back. Someone took me to the chiropractor—there I was, with my hand out again, needing help—where I found out through a series of strange tests that I had a bladder infection that was causing spasms in my lower back. I returned to the boat with a jar of cranberry juice concentrate and a gallon of water, and told Allen.

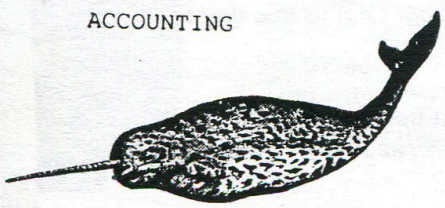
"I think you're dealing with quackery here," glowered Allen when I described my visit, but he generously paid the $85.00 fee.

I managed to finish the season without any more personal breakdowns, though after all that I'd been through I was a lousy deckhand and Allen was extra inclined toward irritation with me. The state of Alaska paid the bill for my hospital stay, as I qualified for assistance. I just needed my doctor to certain that I had been in a life-threatening situation. Dr. Smith initially refused to sign the necessary papers, but finally relented. I didn't get a cent from my boyfriend, but he bought my plane ticket home and was as supportive as he could be from 4,000 miles away. The week I returned to Chicago one of my best Kodiak pals finally succumbed to breast cancer.

You know, I was angry for a long time. I still get angry. I have fantasies of going up to Kodiak and teaching women's self-health to people who have only the Women's Crisis Pregnancy Center. The week before I left the island that summer, I went up under the bridge with a can of spray paint and did a big piece exposing the anti-choice frauds. Wrote a shout-out to the girls to stay away from them. It stayed up for four days.

If I had to do it again, I would have flown to Portland, Oregon, stayed with my sister and had a $350 abortion with a $500 plane ticket. Betcha I wouldn't have gotten sick. Betcha the doctor wouldn't've had a ponytail.

ACCOUNTING



ABORTION	$470.00
PLANE TICKET	$180.00
TAXI	$30.00
LOST WAGES	$3,000.00
TOTAL	$3,680.00

by Moe Bowstern
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BITTER SWEET 16'S DIRTY LITTLE SECRET- A FAMILY AFFAIR BY FIRECRACKER

yeah it may sound cliche but i got pregnant on a beach in florida just 2 weeks before my junior year, just 16 years old, by a soon to be frat boy. Even though the not so immaculate conception took place in florida I became another teen pregnancy statistic for the state of mississippi which boasts the largest number of teen pregnancies in the country. I started elementary with some 110+ kids and by graduation there were 89 of us . The difference in those numbers was mostly drop-outs due to pregnancy.

It was the summer of 1990 just a few months after I had lost my virginity. I had been living with my aunt in florida for summer vacation and came back to my Mississippi small town of 5000 folx to find out that one of my two best friends was pregnant and already planning her wedding. She was 16 too. Even after hearing her news I never thought that I could be pregnant. . Naive was not the word for it, i believed the 19 year old guy who told me he was sterile. He never came in me; he always pulled out so how could i get pregnant??? You're not going to believe this but the first time i even got the notion that i could be pregnant was through an after school special they were showing in my vo-tech class about a teen getting pregnant and having an abortion. I am still incredulous that they were allowed to show this "special" in a public school in mississippi, but as an immediate result I identified with the young girl in the movie whose boyfriend told her that he knew what he was doing and she shouldn't worry about getting pregnant. . That afternoon on the school bus i sat next to my other best friend(who was mormom and still proudly a virgin) and asked her what she would do if she got pregnant. She told me that, of course, she would have the baby, she could think of no other option. I confided in her that my period was late and that i thought i should buy a pregnancy test. To keep the gossip levels down we went to a near by town to buy a test. That next morning i woke up super early but my grandmother was on to me. She followed me and banged on the door asking me what was taking so long. . I couldn't figure out how to mix my pee in the different valves. The test came out negative but i knew i had fucked up. . It was becoming more and more apparent that yes I really could be pregnant. . After hiding the test, I buried my face in my grandmother's lap and cried. I played it off as adolescent confusion, which wasn't far from the truth.. A few daze later, i finally got hip to the tests you pee on and sure enough it came out bright blue indicating that i did indeed have the hormone in my body that connotes pregnancy. At this point i got on the phone and called my summer fling who had started college and joined a fraternity. As I sobbed over the phone all he could do was tell me about all his parties and new social obligations to his fuckin frat. i was a mess. i didn't want his baby. shit, i was still a baby. I then called my cousin in Memphis, the closest big city!, who had just gotten out of rehab for drugs and depression and who had had an abortion a few years back at age 15. She became my support.

I had to get rides to go see her. There was this guy from memphis that had a crush on me and would take me to see her. He was a weirdo christian that wanted to save my soul. At this point and time I could truly say I was an alcoholic. I already drank almost everyday and now that I was pregnant I drank even more. He told me if I'd hang out with him he'd drive me around and be my designated driver. So one evening I had downed at least a 6 pack alone and I screamed for him to pull over. He pulled into a mcdonald's parking lot and I ran inside but never made it to the bathroom I puked right there in front of the counter and on to customers and then ran outside back to his car like nothing had ever happened. I never told him I was pregnant. Actually it was a huge secret. Only a few people knew. It was a small town and gossip there could drain your life blood. My virgin best friend and I continued to plan our other best friend's baby shower who to this day still doesn't know I was pregnant at the same time as her. .

. I was actually only consciously pregnant for 2 and half weeks but that time seemed like an eternity. I didn't want to wake up or go to school and my mom increasingly screamed at

me more and more. One day I couldn't stand her yelling any more. I broke down in a fit of retaliation and told her that she'd better be nice to me because I was pregnant. She locked herself in her bedroom where I heard her bawl for hours. I felt some twisted immediate gratification that she too was suffering. My mom was very right wing christian but by my surprise, she told me I only had one option and that was to have an abortion- that she would not see me waste away like she had in small town mississippi, that I was someone that was going to make a difference in the world and I was too young to be a mother and she was too young to be a grandmother. That was the end of discussion.

My cousin helped me make all the arrangements and my appointment with planned parenthood. The dickhead frat boy who knocked me up wound up last minute showing up and paying the full 200 dollars when I threatened to have him kicked out of the frat by another cousin who had seniority in his same fraterity. In miss-I-pissi the family connections are strong.

So that Saturday, dickhead took me to memphis to meet up with my cousin and then we all went to planned parenthood together. I still remember the old brick nondescript building that looked like any ordinary residence. The thing that set it apart were all the protestors with graphic signs of aborted fetuses. I had an escort in an orange vest walk me to the door as my cousin and dickhead had to fiend the pro-crazies off. Inside there was first the paper work, the wait, then them calling me to the back. I was taken to a room where at least a dozen other women awaited. Most everyone was trying to avoid eye contact except one woman who kept saying it just must be in the water everyone she knew was getting pregnant and this was her 3rd time at this clinic and for us not to be scared that it was no big deal! Individually we were each taken to see a counselor who described the procedure and accessed whether we were able to go through with our decision. I never thought of any!
other choice. Of course I was scared but I was more scared to have a baby and be stuck in mississippi as a single mom the rest of my life. When I went back to the waiting room I was no longer ashamed at my decision and started looking people in the eye. All of a sudden I recognized a familiar face. I had not seen her since I was a little girl. She was my cousins' next door neighbor and favorite playmate. She had come all the way from missouri because in tennessee there was no law about minors having to have a parent's consent to have an abortion. We were both the same age and confident of our decision. When it was my turn to spread my legs on the stirr-ups I started to resent dickhead more than ever. Where was he? He got off, literally, so easy and here I was holding the hand of some nurse I didn't know imaging that my little mocassin shoes were taking me through the woods to a very peaceful place many worlds away. I whimpered and sang songs of delirium. Anything!
to forget what was happening. The doctor was a nice woman with not much to say. Overall it was a relatively short procedure but everytime I think of it, even today, I catch my pussy muscles clinching up
Afterwards they took me into another room, gave me a big bulky pad to bleed on and a place to rest . I cramped for some time and when I was able to muster up the energy to get up, I went out to find my cousin and dickhead. I was starving. At this point I was anemic and my proteins were low so of all things I craved not only beef, but krystal burger, also known as white castles. . Yeah, yeah, I know it's gross but I was a different person back then, remember I was not only dating a frat boy but a right wing christian. So anyway, dickhead said that he didn't have time to stop and get me a couple of 25 cent burgers because he wasn't hungry. Now you understand why I just refer to him as dickhead.
That was it for me with him. I went home and my Mom tucked me in bed and kept him away from me. AT around 10:00 I went to the kitchen to get some food. It was labor-day

weekend and all my cousins were in town and everyone was in front of the tv watching the news. And guess what they were showing ... "pro-lifers protested in front of planned parenthood today...." The reporter announced as I panically ran to get in front of the tv. Who knows if they showed me going inside I was too busy distracting everyone away from watching. Media Assholes. Is there a such thing as confidentiality? I was terrified to go to school. What if someone saw me on tv. I missed so much school year that even though I had straight a's they threatened to fail me.

AFTERWARD religious fanatacism

Even though I knew that I made the best choice for me. It was a challenge to not be waivered and remorseful. Even though my mom had originally advocated for" it" her christian conscious caught up with her, she constantly reminded me of what a bad promiscuous teenager whore I was and used it against me every chance she got. I even one time soon after went before the church to confess that I was a sinner but never did tell them my little "dirty secret." (this is before they kicked me out of church for hanging out with people of a darker skin hue.) As for the right wing boy that had a crush on me... he said that jesus had sent him a message in code which stated that I had had an abortion but that jesus still loved me. When I refused to be his boyfriend or verify his suspicions of my abortion, he continued to harass me by calling and telling me he had dreams of me burning in hell. As for my best friends, my virgin best friend never did support me and thought that I would regret my decision. Within a year she was pregnant, had a baby and got married. She got divorced and found out she was pregnant, this time out of wedlock. She too got an abortion. My other best friend now has an 11 year old and has 2 other children, every child by a different marriage and divorce. She still lives in Mississippi and leads pentacostal revivals on parade floats.

As for frat boy I don't fuckin know or care. All I do know is that the overall experience set me on a path that allowed me to separate myself from oppressive religion and people so that I could eventually love myself and my decisions.

MY MOTHER WAS A KOSMONAUT*

The 60s were a pretty heady time, but oh we were so naïve. Thrust into an age of incredible freedom, we were still caught in the traditional mores of generations before. We had sex at will, but could not legally get birth control. NYC had Planned Parenthood, but what was a sexually active 20 year old to do in Binghamton, NY. Books, can you believe there were none. So we all came up with schemes to avoid pregnancy. Mine was no dumber than most, a rhythm method that worked at least for a while and then I was pregnant. I had no intention of having that baby. My parents were strict, they would never understand and I was too afraid to even think of approaching them. I wanted an abortion. I had friends, and they started calling. People knew doctors, and someone knew someone that knew someone. My friend, Anna, found a doctor in NYC who said to call Stuart. There was a doctor in Maryland. No last names, abortion was illegal, women were dying but it was illegal. She called Stuart, pretending to be me. Here were the instructions, go down to Baltimore, take a bus to a small town, wait in front of the movie theater, a black limousine would pick me up and bring me back three hours later. Oh, and bring $1000 in cash. As I read this, I can't believe I ever did it– I am not a risk taker but the greater risk was being pregnant. Fortunately I had the money, my Aunt had given me a bank account a few weeks before. My friend Anna and I flew to NYC and withdrew the cash. I was sure the bank teller was suspicious. I was afraid of bumping into my Aunt. We boarded the plane, landed in Baltimore and went to the movie theater. I was nervous in the limousine and Stuart was the go between – six women in a black limousine. We drove through the country and went to a summer cottage set up like a series of operating rooms. No pain killer, just severe pain and it was all over. $6,000 for an afternoon of work, wondered what happened to him when 1973 came around. My friend Anna was waiting for me. We went back and spent the night, no after effects. On the way home, I started laughing hysterically, I was okay. I married the father – we have two boys. I never told my boys until a few years ago, I don't know but I was afraid. Would they be shocked, would they be mad? They were so nonchalant about it – I was shocked. Abortion is my most passionate issue – if you are not pro-choice, you will never get my vote. It is the watershed issue – women were dying- men weren't dying –women were dying, and no one cared. When I finally started talking about abortion to my friends, almost everyone had had one. We couldn't get birth control, so we just got pregnant.

– LOUISE Apparatus

reprinted from Loreadine #10 zine

M.★E.

I had a dream that my friend Kari* was pregnant. When I called her later that week it turned out that she was pregnant. She is already a mom and knew for sure that having more kids is not what she wants. She also knew that she didn't want to have a clinical abortion, so our self-help group decided to do a menstrual extraction. We have been studying and practicing M.E. with each other for more than a year, and so we felt confident in our ability to perform a safe and thorough M.E. It helped that Kari is very diligent about keeping track of her menstrual cycles and knew that she was two to three weeks late for her period. I'd recommend that all women keep track of their menstrual cycles.

We sat down together on the evening we were going to do the M.E. and talked about her last cycles. They had all been normal and her last cycle was no lighter then the previous ones, so we ruled out the possibility of conception occurring earlier then 5 or 5 1/2 weeks ago. We also talked about what her discharge and cervical mucus had been like this last cycle. She said that she had gotten long stretchy cervical mucus (fertile mucus) and then gone dry, so she thought it was safe to have sex. However, a couple days later she had more fertile (long stretchy) mucus and this clued her in to the possibility of being pregnant. In addition, her breasts were sore (another sign of pregnancy).

While we waited for the water to boil, so that we could finish serializing our equipment Kari took some crampbark tincture. She had 2 or 3 menstrual extractions before this and cramping and pain had been a definite issue. Both previous M.E.s had been done while she was on her period and not actually pregnant.

Just before we started Kari also took a small swig of whiskey to herp her relax. Of course me and the other woman doing the M.E. stayed absolutely sober. We had heard a scary story of women getting high while doing an M.E. and the woman getting the M.E. had a seizure and died of a perforated uterus. I don't drink anyway, but this was an extra reminder of the importance of staying totally alert and sober while doing an M.E. The woman's life and future fertility rest in your ability to do a good, safe job!

We decided to use a 5mm cannula because Kari was about 5 weeks L.M.P. (L.M.P. means Last Menstrual Period and is used by doctors and clinics to approximate how far along a pregnancy is. Doctors use L.M.P. as the date of conception even though most women don't conceive during their period. The L.M.P. date is roughly 2 weeks earlier then the date of conception.) The sterile cannula with the sterile lube on the tip of it entered Kari's os easily and she didn't feel any cramping. The cannula even gently passed through her inner os and into her uterus with no cramping which was great! The inner os is usually a trigger point for many women and it can be both physically and emotionally trying for her when a cannula passes through that area. It is a very sensitive area for some women and its not used to being touched or "invaded". It can also bring up painful memories if a woman is a survivor of sexual abuse. Our group has learned that doing M.E. can be as much about helping a woman through her emotions as it is about ending a pregnancy or aspirating the uterus.

But none of this was a problem for Kari tonight. She was breathing deeply and staying concentrated which really helped her. And also, she was totally confident and supported in her decision to end this pregnancy- which helps make it all around easier for a woman to have an M.E.

*not her real name

The cannula rotated very easily with in Kari's womb and the blood began to flow through the cannula and into the tube almost immediately after we had established suction with the syringe. I continued rotating the cannula for 15 or 20 minutes. At this point there was several tablespoons of blood in the jar. Then 25 minutes later the blood slowed to almost a stop, but her womb didn't feel contracted or rough like it would if we were near completion. We reasoned that maybe some tissue had gotten clogged in the opening of the cannula and was preventing the blood from flowing. We decided to bread the suction and see if that would re-establish the flow of blood.

After we reconnected the tube to the jar and established suction again, Kari began to feel some cramping. She took deep breaths and tried to remain centered. We kept the talk encouraging and positive to help her out. She was doing a really great job!

At this point, the blood was flowing somewhat but not as fast as before, and it felt like her womb had begun to contract somewhat. It was harder to rotate the cannula and it felt almost as if her womb was rough whereas it had felt very smooth and large before.

Her cramps intensified and she felt like she wanted to stop. I felt like there was still a bit more that we should try to get out. Together we decided to stop after 2 more minutes.

We broke the suction and gently removed the cannula. We then "washed the blood". We poured water into the jar with the blood, let the clots and tissue settle to the bottom and then poured off the bloody water. We did this several times until the water was clear and we could easily see all of the tissue we had removed. We found the placenta and the umbilical cord (about 1/4th inch long). But we did not find any chorionic villi or the tree of life (½ to 2 inches long). This confused us because we understood that an M.E. is not really complete if the tree of life is not removed. This could mean that Kari was still pregnant and the M.E. would need to be done again. It was also at this point that we realized that we had not properly cleaned Kari's vagina and the face of her cervix with Betadine (a disinfectant). We were a little worried about the possibility of infection. Kari immediately began taking high doses of immune system support herbs.

We were confused about not finding any chorionic villi and worried about Kari's risk of infection. We slept over her house that night and I kept in phone contact with her every day for the following week and a half.

The first day after the M.E. Kari's cervix hurt slightly and she saw some white discharge that she thought was puss. She was not bleeding at this time. Fearing infection she immediately cleaned her vagina and cervix with Betadine, and continued taking herbal immune system support herbs. She also had some lower back pain and a slight temperature of 99 degrees. Later that day she began bleeding. (2)

The second day she cleaned her vagina and cervix with Gentian Violet, an anti fungal flower extract that is famous for getting rid of yeast infections. And she kept up with the herbs. At this point she was bleeding heavier. After 2 days, her lower back stopped hurting and her temperature returned to 98 degrees, but her breasts were still sore and she was now passing clots of blood. She was soaking through one pad every few hours. We were worried that she 1) had an infection and 2) that she may begin to hemorrhage. She did not want to go to the doctor's office or to the emergency room for fear that they would give her a D and C abortion. We decided to wait a few days and see what happened, in the meanwhile she made an appointment with a doctor for a

week later. A real hemorrhage that is something to be very concerned of is if a woman is bleeding through one pad every hour. Kari was not at that point, but I was definitely concerned, not wanting it to get to that point.

One week after the M.E. Kari's breasts were still sore and she was still passing clots. She was tired from loss of lots of blood. We decided to get some advice from a trusted friend who has done literally hundreds of menstrual extractions, a woman who calls herself a blood witch.

Our friend the blood witch assured us that all of Kari's symptoms were normal, except for the sore breasts, which should normally go away sooner then 7 days after an M.E. The slight temperature is very common after an M.E. as pregnancy hormones work themselves out of the body. Lower back pain is also to be expected for several days after an M.E. The bleeding normally occurs for up to 2 weeks after an M.E. and while Kari was bleeding more heavily, it was not out of the norm. The only thing of concern was that Kari may still be pregnant as indicated by her sore breasts. Our friend the blood witch said that any of the following reasons may be the cause of Kari's sore breasts:

1) The M.E. was incomplete and we had missed the embryonic sac, so Kari was still pregnant.
2) There was the possibility that Kari had been pregnant with twins and we had removed one sac and not gotten the other one. If this was the case it would also explain why she was bleeding so much because her body was confused as to what to do.
3) The possibility that Kari was much more advanced in her pregnancy then we had thought and had a fetus too large to pass through the cannula. If this was the case Kari would need to go through a miscarriage or clinical abortion.

Together we ruled out the possibility of Kari being much more advanced in her pregnancy because she had been away from her partner for the whole month prior to conception. We thought that the possibility of twins sounded likely due to the fact that Kari had ovulated twice in one month (the two times she found fertile mucus in her last cycle).

Our friend the blood witch gave us the following ideas of how to handle the situation:

1) We could simply re-aspirate (do another M.E.) to remove any missed tissue.
2) Kari could go to a hospital and get a test that would show her hormone levels. Then Kari could go back and get another test 48 hours later and if her hormone levels had dropped that would mean she was no longer pregnant, and we would know that doing another M.E. was not necessary.
3) Kari could have a trained midwife do a uterine size check to see if she was still pregnant. (3)
4) Kari could have an ultrasound to see if she was still pregnant.
5) We could just wait to see if her sore breasts went away.

We decided to wait one more day and if her breasts were still sore then we would go ahead and do another M.E. Fortunately, by the next day (the 8th day after the M.E.) Kari was only spotting lightly and her breast were no longer sore. I was so relieved!!! *She* was so relieved!!!

It was a worrying experience for our self-help group but we learned SO much from it, and I believe that it really made us stronger. Now we have a much better understanding of what is normal to expect after an M.E. and all of us will be 100 times more careful in how we clean out the vagina and cervix prior to an M.E. Luckily Kari never developed an infection which I credit to her awesome diligence in taking the immune support herbs.

by: Katrina Clit Klatt

Pregnancy, Herbal Abortion, and Me
By Chantel G.

My first attempt to write about my experience with an herbal abortion was rather glib, as if I were telling about a silly adventure I had a long time ago when I was very young. However, when I read the journal I kept when I thought I was pregnant in the summer of 1996, I remembered that I wasn't amused. I was scared, and I felt alone. Shannan, my housemate and dear friend for many years, was out of town the entire time I was struggling with the possibility of an unwanted pregnancy and a medical abortion. I isolated myself from most of my friends by deciding not to tell them what was happening in my life. Being pregnant made me feel embarrassed and stupid. I was 25, and the man involved was about ten years older. I was not in a committed relationship with him, he wasn't really even my friend, and we'd only had one sexual encounter. I understood that he didn't want r folks to know that we had been sexual together. I didn't tell him that I thought I was pregnant; only three of my friends knew that I might be pregnant and that I was trying to bring on my period using natural and non-surgical methods.

After reading through my journal to check some facts, I decided that the best way to present this piece of my past was to rely heavily on what I had written while the events of the pregnancy were unfolding. Due to space constraints, I've edited what I wrote during that time.

On Friday, June 21, I started my period.

On Thursday, July 11, I had sex with the man I will refer to as D.

On Sunday, July 14, I wrote

I've started my period. That's really weird. It's really early. This is <u>way</u> early.

There's not another mention of my period until Saturday, July 27.

I think I'm pregnant. I haven't had a period since last month, and usually by this late in the month I've started. I'm going to give myself a few more days until I panic. I will not go out and buy a home pregnancy test unless I haven't started my period on August 1. That will give my body another five days to work things out. We did use a condom, but a couple of times D. rubbed his penis on my vulva before he had a condom on, and I had to remind him that it wasn't a good idea…

So what do I do if I am pregnant? Have an abortion. . . Do I tell D.? He is pro choice. .. But no, I don't think I would say anything to him. Things would just be more complicated if [he] knew. It's not as if he loves me. It's not as if I should expect any emotional or financial support from him.

Later the same day

I really think I'm pregnant... The really weird thing is that I thought my period had started on the 14th. I had a bit of the thick, brown discharge that looks like little dribbles of chocolate syrup on the toilet paper, and I once went to the bathroom and discovered a bit of bright pink blood on the toilet paper, and a few days ago, even less of a lighter brown discharge, but that has been <u>it</u>. .. No dark and copious discharge… If I am pregnant, I'm only fifteen days pregnant…I've certainly got plenty of time to take care of this matter.

I went to [a now defunct feminist bookstore and magic shop owned and operated by a nurse/midwife/healer/SM lesbian/witch] today and paid $15 for three bags of assorted herbs that should do the trick. I have to fill my biggest pot with water and bring it to a boil, then throw in everything in all of the bags, and let it steep for a while. Then I have to strain out the herbs and put them in the freezer so I can use them again later. I have to drink a cup of the tea (which [the witch healer] said is nasty) every two to three hours for five days…[The witch healer] also said I should have at least three orgasms a day in order to get my uterus contracting. Once my water…I am to put nothing in my vagina~no tampons, no fingers, no penises, no dildos, no nothing. ([The witch healer] was adamant about that aspect of the situation.) If I saturate two pads in an hour (or was it two pads in two hours?) I need to go to the hospital. If my temperature goes above 100.4 degrees (indicating that I have an infection) I should go to the hospital. I'm going to have cramps. I am going to be uncomfortable, at least once I start bleeding. If I'm not pregnant, this brew will induce my period. If I don't start bleeding, I am definitely pregnant, and I'll have to have a surgical abortion.

I am ravenous, which really makes me think I'm pregnant. I just want to eat. I want to eat everything in sight and everything I can think of. Also, biking…today, I could barely pedal. My legs felt like noodles. I was wiped out and going s-l-o-w…

Sunday, July 28 I still haven't started my period. Nothing. Not a speck of pink or a tiny brown chunk. Nothing…I am going to start with the herbal remedy tomorrow…

Monday, July 29 I am drinking the tea. It is awful. It is the nastiest thing I've ever swallowed. [I quickly began calling it "swill."] It is so bitter. It has such an awful aftertaste. I tried drinking it straight, but even with tons of sugar, it was gagging me. I tried mixing it with licorice spice tea, but that didn't work very well. The thing that's

worked best so far is mixing it with Coca Cola and eating a bite of something after each drink. I've gagged a few times, but I haven't puked. I had no idea anything could taste so nasty...

I...bought some vitamin C tablets, which [the witch healer] said would cause a miscarriage in high dosages. I think she said I had to consume quantities in excess of 100mg...I've taken 500mg today.

So far no bleeding...Please bleed. Please bleed. Please bleed. Please bleed.

I've been using my vibrator to have orgasms. I've had three today. Orgasms are supposed to shake up my uterus and make it expel its contents.

Tuesday, July 30 I'm still not bleeding. I thought it would happen sooner. [The witch healer] said to drink the tea for five days, but I was hoping that it would kick in sooner. I want this problem to be over. What if the herbal mixture doesn't work? I know what I'll have to do~have a surgical abortion~but I obviously want to avoid doing that. I want the tea to work.

I was able to get more tea down this morning. I have not been able to drink a glass every two hours...the best I've been able to do is...every four hours...It is so incredibly nasty.

Wednesday, July 31 I still haven't started my period. No blood. I'm really upset. This is for real.

Maybe I'm not drinking enough [swill]. I'm doing the best I can. It's so awful...I know I'm supposed to do this drinking swill thing for five days, but I didn't really think it would take five days to work.

What if nothing happens? What if Friday comes and goes and I still haven't started bleeding? What then? Then I have to call an abortion clinic, make an appointment, get money out of my savings account, find someone to give me a ride to where I need to go (although if I go to the one on Gentilly Blvd., I can ride the Elysian Fields bus), possibly take time off of work. I do not want to deal with all of this...

I feel so alone. I told A. what was going [on] ...She's been very supportive, but I know she doesn't really want to hear all about this problem. .. I feel incredibly stupid too. I'm embarrassed to talk about it...We were using a condom...We did not have unprotected intercourse. He did not ejaculate near my vagina. He ejaculated into a condom. We did not notice a tear in the condom. The only possibility (other than a tear in the condom that we didn't notice) was [that] he had pre-ejaculate on his penis which [he] rubbed on my vulva...

Thursday, August 1 I'm drinking swill mixed with Coca Cola.

Still no change in my condition. No blood...

A. and I discussed last night whether or not I should say something to D...She thinks women shouldn't stay quiet and take care of things and let men off the hook. I just don't want to be alone in this. ..

If I don't start bleeding by Saturday, I will get a pregnancy test, and it that is positive, I will tell D.

Friday, August 2 I don't want to be pregnant. It is so unfair. It is so fucked up. Why? Why? Why? I know better. I don't deserve this. I Didn't Even Fucking Have An Orgasm!!! What can be more unfair than that? He came, and I'm pregnant. It sucks! It sucks! It sucks!

I want to have an abortion shower. It seems only fair that I gather my friends around me for support and have them bring me food and presents. I think it would be a hoot...[My friends] could bring... boxes of super maxi pads, cans of spermicidal foam. I could give condoms as party favors. A. thought it was a great idea. We laughed really hard.

Saturday, August 3 I did a pregnancy test today. It came out negative. Wow! Relief. And yet, I wonder what is wrong with me. Something is just not quite right. My period is about ten days late. ..

Tuesday, August 6 I did another pregnancy test last night, a different brand. The result was negative, but I still haven't yet begun bleeding. I think I need to be around other menstruating women. I'm honestly beginning to think this is all happening because Shannan is out of town.

Thursday, August 8 I still have not started my period...I really think all this is going on because Shannan's not around. I think our cycles are tied together.

Friday, August 9 I'm bleeding! I'm bleeding! I'm bleeding! [*Here I drew in three little smiley faces.]* I went to the bathroom a little while ago, and the toilet paper came away pink...I am so relieved. I don't care if blood pours down my leg. I would cherish any blood running down my leg...

Saturday, August 10 I am not bleeding enough. In fact, I'm not bleeding at all. .. I want to gush blood. I want to clear everything out...

Later the same day More pink on the toilet paper...Bleed Bleed Bleed...

Sunday, August 11 I'm finally bleeding like I should have been by July 25th. I am having cramps too. They are worse than normal...I'm awfully relieved to be bleeding. ..

Later the same day The cramps have slacked off, but I'm still experiencing some discomfort. I'm not complaining, only reporting. Surely, my cramps are less painful and costly than an abortion. I am so glad that I'm bleeding. I don't care if it hurts.

Tuesday, August 13 Shannan's back from vacation...Her period started on Friday, same as mine. We were so freaked out when we realized that we started on the same day, me about two weeks late...

My period is tapering off, but I've bled enough not to worry about being pregnant any longer. Relief.

So what was going on with my body? Was I pregnant? Did the swill and the vitamin C and the orgasms lead to an abortion? Was my period just late because with Shannan gone the rhythm of my cycle was off? I've asked myself these questions hundreds of times, and I'm still not sure of the answers. I had made an appointment at Planned Parenthood, but once I started bleeding, I forgot about it and didn't remember it until several days too late.

As I reread my journal, I realized that I was trying to stay disconnected from the entire situation. I didn't want to know if I was pregnant, I just wanted to bleed. I didn't want the complication of communicating with D. I didn't want the embarrassment of telling people that I -had gotten "caught." I wanted the ordeal to be over, and the less I had to think about it, the better. I wish I had given it more thought, done more research, asked more question and found someone to give me answers.

What would I do differently now if I were in a similar situation?

First, I would take a pregnancy test immediately. I would want to know as soon as possible if I were pregnant. Shelia Kitzinger writes in <u>The Complete Book of Pregnancy and Childbirth</u> " Pregnancy can now be diagnosed about two weeks after conception, on the day your period should have started if you have a regular monthly cycle, though you are likely to get more accurate results if you wait at least another four days..." She also suggests that if the test results are negative but you don't start bleeding in a few days, test again. If I knew I were pregnant (and I didn't want to be), I would start using natural remedies as early as possible. If a pregnancy test were negative, I would feel less nervous and anxious and more comfortable allowing my body to bleed in its own time.

If the test results were positive, I would immediately tell the man involved and ask for what I needed. If any man participated in sex that resulted in my pregnancy and he didn't try to support me, I would be sure that other women in the community knew about it so they could protect themselves.

If I thought I were pregnant, I would be sure not to isolate myself from my community. I am astounded that I did not ask for help from friends, especially those that I knew to be pro-choice. I can't believe I thought I might take a bus to and from an abortion appointment! I think that during the termination of a pregnancy, women need lots of love and encouragement; I know I wanted a lot more love and encouragement than I was willing to request. I wouldn't again choose privacy over support. I would speak out, not only so I could get my needs met, but also to remind people that sometimes pregnancy happens even when folks are using contraception.

I should have asked the witch healer many more questions and written down her answers. She said some important things I didn't really understand or remember once I got home. I also would want to know exactly what herbs were in the tea. I think my failure to ask questions was another case of wanting to think about my situation as little as possible. Asking more questions and getting answers would more actively connect my mind to the processes happening in my body.

If I were using herbs to end a pregnancy, I would eat according to the dietary recommendations in <u>Herbal Abortion The Fruit of the Tree of Knowledge</u> by Uni M. Tiamat. I would eat fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains and beans while avoiding meat (I think I got that part right, as I was mostly vegetarian by then), dairy products, sodium, sugar, and caffeine. I believe that the ice cream I ate during that time, as well as the Coca Cola I mixed with the tea, were detracting from the helpfulness of the herbs.

Finally, if I were doing it all again, I would practice "imaging" as described by Inga Muscio in her book <u>Cunt</u>. "<u>Every</u> night, when you are falling asleep, graphically imagine the part of your body that's giving you problems <u>changing</u>...When I was pregnant, I <u>vividly, consistently</u> (I do believe these are the operative words when imaging) imagined the walls of my uterus gently shedding...When I induced miscarriage, I breathed, ate, shat and slept thinking of nothing else but the lining of my uterus shedding." This technique can't hurt anything, and as I get older, I am slowly realizing that the power of the mind can be truly amazing.

I was lucky. Even though I did a lot of things wrong, I didn't have to endure a surgical abortion. Since then, I've sought out information and resources so that if faced with an unwanted pregnancy, I can take steps and attempt to end it. Although I agree that surgical abortion must remain safe and legal, I feel the need to try to heal myself and my friends before turning over our bodies and our money to the biomedical industry. Wise women have been helping each other control reproduction for thousands of years. I want to contribute to the continuation of that way of life.

Chantel G. is a sex positive women's health and sexuality educator. To get this piece in its complete form, send a stamp to 1604 Tennessee Street Downstairs Lawrence, KS 66044. Thanks to Ailecia for support while doing this writing.

IF I HAVE AN IMMACULATE CONCEPTION...
I'M KEEPING THE BABY....

PARTHENOGENESIS...IT MEANS
VIRGIN BIRTH...AND I AM A BELIEVER....
I DON'T BELIEVE JESUS WAS CONCEIVED THIS WAY..MY FRIEND ANGRY RON WHO IS A HYPER RELIGOUS SCHOLAR TOLD ME THE VIRGIN BIRTH MYTH WASSPAWNED OUT OF A MISTRANS LATION OF A WORD THAT MEANT BOTH VIRGIN AND YOUNG GIRL OF MARRIAGABLE AGE...SO INSTEAD OF TAKING THE WORD TO MEANYYOUNG WOMAN THEY TOOK IT TO MEAN VIRGIN...BUT THIS JESUS MYTH IS EVEN MORE IMPROBABLE BECAUSE IN PARTHENOGENESIS IN HUMANS...THE BABY IS ALWAYS A GIRL...WOMEN HAVE 2 X CHROMOSOMES AND WITHOUT THE Y CHROMOSOME O F THE SPERM IT'S PRETTY UNLIKELY TO HAVE A BOY..

ANOMALIES
and CURIOSITIES *of*
MEDICINE

by GEORGE M. GOULD, A.M., M.D.
and WALTER L. PYLE, A.M., M.D.
WITH 208 ILLUSTRATIONS IN THE TEXT AND 12 HALF-TONE PLATES

Impregnation without completion of the copulative act by reason of some malformation, such as occlusion of the vagina or uterus, fibrous and unruptured hymen, etc., has been a subject of discussion in the works of medical jurisprudence of all ages; and cases of conception without entrance of the penis are found in abundance throughout medical literature, and may have an important medicolegal bearing. There is little doubt of the possibility of spermatozoa deposited on the genitalia making progress to the seat of fertilization, as their power of motility and tenacity of life have been well demonstrated. Percy [c] reports an instance in which semen was found issuing from the os uteri eight and one-half days after the last intercourse; and a microscopic examination of this semen revealed the presence of living as well as dead spermatozoa. We have occasional instances of impregnation by rectal coitus, the semen finding its way into an occluded vaginal canal by a fistulous communication.

Guillemeau, [d] the surgeon of the French king, tells of a girl of eighteen, who was brought before the French officials in Paris, in 1607, on the citation of her husband of her inability to allow him completion of the marital function. He alleged that he had made several unsuccessful attempts to enter her, and in doing so had caused paraphimosis. On examination by the surgeons she was found to have a dense membrane, of a fibrous nature, entirely occluding the vagina, which they incised. Immediately afterward the woman exhibited morning sickness and the usual signs of pregnancy, and was delivered in four months of a full-term child, the results of an impregnation occasioned by one of the unsuccessful attempts at entrance.

There are many cases of stricture or complete occlusion of the vagina, congenital or acquired from cicatricial contraction, obstructing delivery, and in some the impregnation seems more marvelous than cases in which the obstruction is only a thin membranous hymen. Often the obstruction is so dense as to require a large bistoury to divide it, and even that is not always sufficient, and the Cesarean operation only can terminate the obstructed delivery; we cannot surmise how conception could have been possible. Staples' records a case of pregnancy and parturition with congenital stricture of the vagina. Maisonneuve' mentions the successful practice of a Cesarean operation in a case of congenital occlusion of the vagina forming a complete obstruction to delivery. Verdile" records an instance of imperforate vagina in which the rectovaginal wall was divided and the delivery effected through the rectum and anus. Lombard' mentions an observation of complete occlusion of the vagina in a woman, the mother of 4 living children and pregnant for the fifth time. Thus, almost incredible to relate, it is possible for a woman to become a mother of a living child and yet preserve all the vaginal evidences of virginity. Cole" describes a woman of twenty-four who was delivered without the rupture of the hymen, and Meek" remarks on a similar case. We can readily see that, in a case like that of Verdile, in which rectal delivery is effected, the hymen could be left intact and the product of conception be born alive.

Fig. 147.—Functional supernumerary mamma on the thigh.

Gilbert [b] gives an account of a case of pregnancy in an unmarried woman, who successfully resisted an attempt at criminal connection and yet became impregnated and gave birth to a perfectly formed female child. The hymen was not ruptured, and the impregnation could not have preceded the birth more than thirty-six weeks. Unfortunately, this poor woman was infected with gonorrhea after the attempted assault. Simmons of St. Louis [c] gives a curious peculiarity of conception, in which there was complete closure of the vagina, subsequent conception, and delivery at term. He made the patient's acquaintance from her application to him in regard to a malconditon of her sexual apparatus, causing much domestic infelicity.

Lawson [d] speaks of a woman of thirty-five, who had been married ten months, and whose husband could never effect an entrance; yet she became pregnant and had a normal labor, despite the fact that, in addition to a tough and unruptured hymen, she had an occluding vaginal cyst. Hickinbotham of Birmingham [e] reports the history of two cases of labor at term in females whose hymens were immensely thickened. H. Grey Edwards has seen a case of imperforate hymen which had to be torn through in labor; yet one single act of copulation, even with this obstacle to entrance, sufficed to impregnate. Champion speaks of a woman who became pregnant although her hymen was intact. She had been in the habit of having coitus by the urethra, and all through her pregnancy continued this practice.

Houghton [f] speaks of a girl of twenty-five into whose vagina it was impossible to pass the tip of the first finger on account of the dense cicatricial membrane in the orifice, but who gave birth, with comparative ease, to a child at full term, the only interference necessary being a few slight incisions to permit the passage of the head. Tweedie [g] saw an Irish girl of twenty-three, with an imperforate os uteri, who had menstruated only scantily since fourteen and not since her marriage. She became pregnant and went to term, and required some operative interference. He incised at the point of usual location of the os, and one of his incisions was followed by the flow of liquor amnii, and the head fell upon the artificial opening, the diameter of which proved to be one and a half or two inches; the birth then progressed promptly, the child being born alive.

Guerard [h] notes an instance in which the opening barely admitted a hair; yet the patient reached the third month of pregnancy, at which time she induced abortion in a manner that could not be ascertained.

MANY STORIES TOLD AND THEY ARE TECHNICALLY VIRGIN BIRTHS BUT SOMEHOW IT SEEMS MORE LIKE STORIES OF EXTRA strong SPERM ....A FRIEND TOLD ME OF THIS WOMEN WHO WAS A LESBIAN AND GOT PREGNANT AND NOONE BELIEVED THAT SHE DIDNT SOMEHOW ACCIDENTALLY FUCK A MAN....

(COME ON YOU MUST OF BEEN DRUNK) BUT AS THE LEGEND GOES SHE HAD AN ABORTION...SOME OTHER INTERESTING THINGS I FOUND IN THIS BOOK INCLUDE MALES MENSTRUATING ADDITIONAL FUNCTIONING MAMMARYS..ABORTION BY THE MOUTH FETAL BONES DISCHARGED FROM THE RECTUM, URINARY PASSAGES, ABDOMINAL WALLS...AND THEN THERE IS

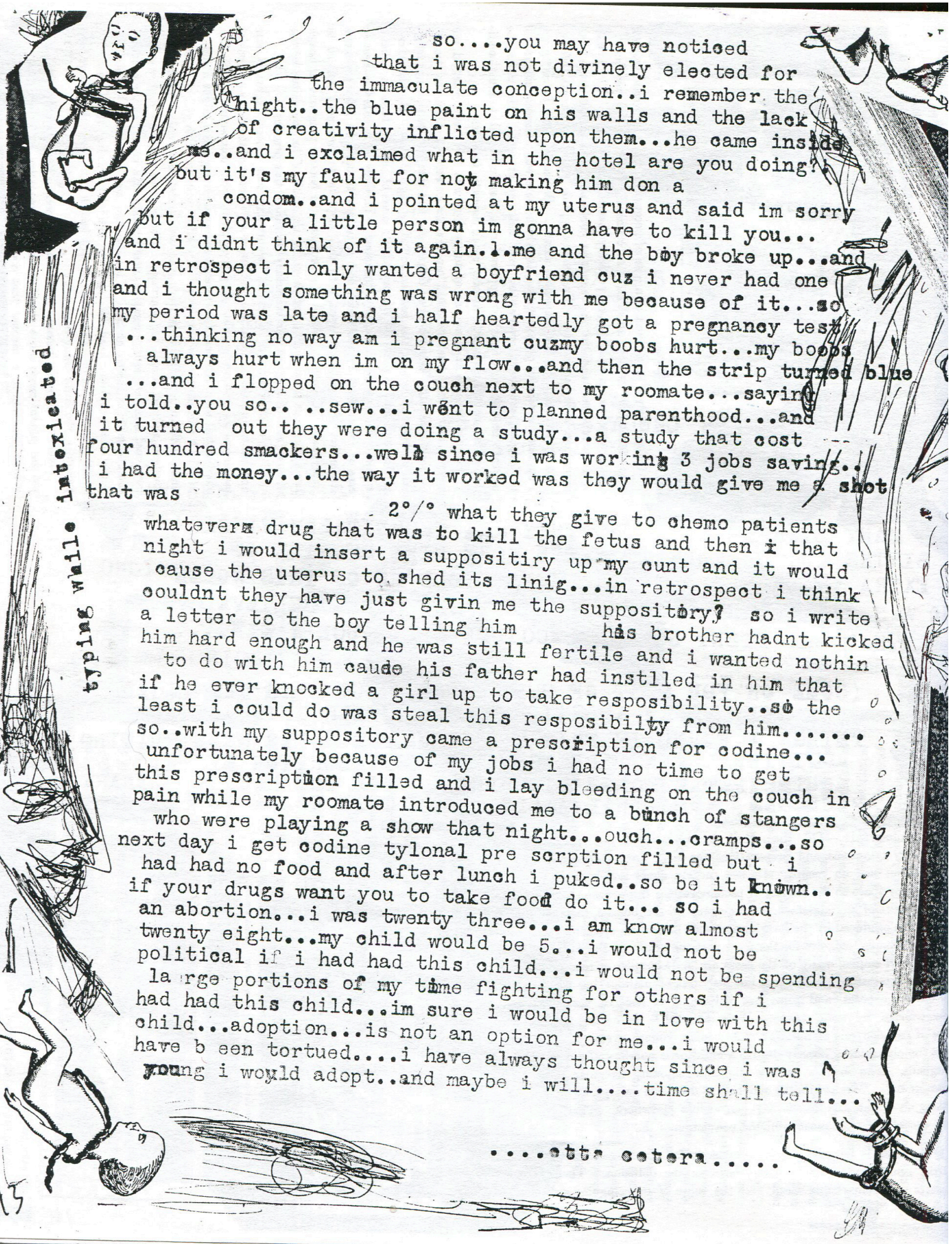
Pseudocyesis.—On the other hand, instances of pregnancy with imaginary symptoms and preparations for birth are sometimes noticed, and many cases are on record. In fact, nearly every text-book on obstetrics gives some space to the subject of pseudocyesis. Suppression of the menses, enlargement of the abdomen, engorgement of the breasts, together with the symptoms produced by the imagination, such as nausea, spasmodic contraction of the abdomen, etc., are for the most part the origin of the cases of pseudocyesis. Of course, many of the cases are not examples of true pseudocyesis, with its interesting phenomena, but instances of malingering for mercenary or other purposes, and some are calculated to deceive the most expert obstetricians by their tricks. Weir Mitchell [i] delineates an interesting case of pseudocyesis as follows: "A woman, young, or else, it may be, at or past the climacteric, eagerly desires a child or is horribly afraid of becoming pregnant. The menses become slight in amount, irregular, and at last cease or not. Meanwhile the abdomen and breasts enlarge, owing to a rapid taking on of fat, and this is far less visible elsewhere. There comes with this excess of fat the most profound conviction of the fact of pregnancy. By and by the child is felt, the physician takes it for granted, and this goes on until the great diagnostician, Time, corrects the delusion. Then the fat disappears with remarkable speed, and the reign of this singular simulation is at an end."

6

Conditions simulating pregnancy (pseudocyesis)

5

42



typing while intoxicated

so....you may have noticed that i was not divinely elected for the immaculate conception..i remember the night..the blue paint on his walls and the lack of creativity inflicted upon them...he came inside me..and i exclaimed what in the hotel are you doing? but it's my fault for not making him don a condom..and i pointed at my uterus and said im sorry but if your a little person im gonna have to kill you... and i didnt think of it again..l.me and the boy broke up...and in retrospect i only wanted a boyfriend cuz i never had one and i thought something was wrong with me because of it...so my period was late and i half heartedly got a pregnancy test ...thinking no way am i pregnant cuzmy boobs hurt...my boobs always hurt when im on my flow...and then the strip turned blue ...and i flopped on the couch next to my roomate...saying i told..you so.. ..sew...i went to planned parenthood...and it turned out they were doing a study...a study that cost four hundred smackers...well since i was working 3 jobs saving.. i had the money...the way it worked was they would give me a shot that was 2°/° what they give to chemo patients whatever drug that was to kill the fetus and then i that night i would insert a suppositiry up my cunt and it would cause the uterus to shed its linig...in retrospect i think couldnt they have just givin me the suppository? so i write a letter to the boy telling him his brother hadnt kicked him hard enough and he was still fertile and i wanted nothin to do with him caude his father had instlled in him that if he ever knocked a girl up to take resposibility..so the least i could do was steal this resposibilty from him..... so..with my suppository came a presoription for codine... unfortunately because of my jobs i had no time to get this presoription filled and i lay bleeding on the couch in pain while my roomate introduced me to a bunch of stangers who were playing a show that night...ouch...cramps...so next day i get codine tylonal pre scrption filled but i had had no food and after lunch i puked..so be it known.. if your drugs want you to take food do it... so i had an abortion...i was twenty three...i am know almost twenty eight...my child would be 5...i would not be political if i had had this child...i would not be spending la rge portions of my time fighting for others if i had had this child...im sure i would be in love with this child...adoption...is not an option for me...i would have b een tortued....i have always thought since i was young i would adopt..and maybe i will....time shall tell...

....ett. cetera.....

Every time I try to write this story I feel like I hit a wall; like I'm scared to complete it. I'm afraid to deny it. I think that in an effort to make it make sense I will force meaning and edit it until it is a commercial. I have been telling my story to myself and others for so long I feel like it has gained so much more meaning. Rather, different meanings. There is the funny abortion story, the sad, the murky, the "I am a victim", the "my mother was my hero", the informative and the others I am still writing.

I feel conflicted about the different ways that I tell the same event. It's not that I am a liar- just that I have different mes telling the same story. There are some versions that are wholly the message: 'hey this is the past and look at how well we live through things'. There are the times when I start to reminisce about what it would be like to be turning 25 soon with an 11 year old daughter or son. Sometimes, I make the argument that I would be a worker bee republican who would be un-thoughtful of the world, just wanting my piece for me and my child(ren). But that is speculation driven by politics- I might have made an amazing anarcho-mom. Mostly I don't want to put down women who've made the decision to raise their children. Who knows what would have happened. All I know is it is done, and I'm trying to do all that I can to the best of my ability.

Generally, the way that I tell my stories is an indicator for how my whole life is feeling. I think that that is why I am rejecting the polar aspects of right and wrong and also the rigidity of having a consistent cohesive story. I feel strength in the reality of ambiguity. I am amusingly comforted by the malleability of reality. I am reflecting on how at times I have told my stories so that they hurt me more, not like the release of tension kind of hurt but the direct and purposeful ripping open of wounds either for attention or just so I could feel something. I remember never telling my story and even making myself forget it and how my breath would catch in my throat, wanting to suffocate as a means of stopping my crying when I would remember.

When I think of all this pain and suppression of the facts of my life I feel I must dissect it. Pull it apart and see the aspects that compose this pain. To learn where it came from. There is so much shame. For being an unrepentant young sexually active girl. For being the girl, in my group of friends, that got caught. For believing a man, ever, about anything that has to do with sex (he told me he was sterile and we didn't use a condom). For being me being pregnant and thirteen. For wanting to swim at summer camp and not being allowed to. For having to take meds there (I was on prozac afterwards). For not taking enough control- I mean other than locking it away for seven years.

All of this shame, guilt, ego-blows and terror. I was mortified that I would be ostracized by my peers, my family and strangers walking down the street. I was terrified that I would become pregnant again. For the next seven years I compulsively wore condoms, yet was pathologically certain after each act that I was knocked-up again. The man, who had contributed his part to my pregnancy, when I was thirteen, denied everything and was threatening to me. I never talked about my phobia to the men I was sleeping with until I started dating an old friend of mine. Even though we used a condom, that did not break, and I was not fertile when we had sex, I began to worry. I brought him into my own hellish drama. He freaked out with me and was supportive, honest and soothing while we talked about our options. I was allowed to play with my desire to be supported by my lover. Through this play I learned that there are some men that I can trust who will be there for me. I don't know the mechanics of what happened that day, but it was magical. Since that freak out with that lover I have only had pregnancy scares based in reality.

I am amazed at how long healing takes. How when I never thought about my abortion I was "fine". When I would fearfully tell people about it, crying, I

was "fine". How fine I was when I laughed about it. And now that I see how much of my pain is internalized societal bullshit I'm still me, but not "fine".

Sometimes I feel guilty for still being sad about my abortion, or worried, even now, as to who would judge me. I am not holding on to this pain. I want it gone, but cannot make something gone. Suppression is not it. Wearing it on my sleeve and inviting others to comment on it, is not it. For me what the healing thing is is talking to my lady friends. For me- I don't know what- why it still hurts- or even why I have the notion of "making things right".

Right is a word that the pro-lifers use. Right as in right and wrong. They use all tactics. I have felt like a betrayer of all the women who've had abortions because I've written love letters to that fetus. I've made up names for her. That part of me is coming to grips with the might-have-beens of my life. I am worried writing this that these words might be taken as an apology for or a residence of my actions. They are not. But the pro-lifers with their insidious propaganda feed into the notion that women who have abortions are cold and unaware or unable to feel emotions. Before I had ever spoken to, face to face, another woman who had had an abortion I had heard the propaganda. Always with the woman who tells her story like this "I was young and under duress. I had my career- my future to think of", here she starts to cry, "all of this time I have been haunted. I have done wrong and I want to warn all of the other women."

Her story ate at me like maggots. I alternately wanted to negate her experience as a lack of strength, or was terrified that if I allowed my self to think of that fetus in any other manner than clinical I would turn pro-lifer. It must seem strange, the ease of such a dramatic shift. For those people who accept the hard edges of right and wrong, life and death, capitalist patriarchy and a woman's ability to distinguish her own meaning, make her own decisions and be treated as an autonomous adult in her actions- maybe for those people- maybe it's all of us that need to explore these ideas way more. I learned that I could never turn pro-lifer.

Basically, I want to support any woman in any decision she makes. I want to tell you that I love my would-be-pre-teen kid, and if you don't care or can't accept that- I don't give a damn.

I want this piece of writing to end there with me telling you I don't give a damn. But that is me acting tuff and being scared thinking that I've told you too much. The reality is that I do care. I give too much of a damn.

I think of the ladies that are thirty and having abortions. I imagine that through the really hard parts of D&C where you try to puke your guts out, the elderly nurse who's holding their hands asks them, too; "So, where's the man that did this to you? Where is he now?" See, I thought that the nurse tried to belittle me with shame and ignite my rage because I was so young. She treated me like a naughty little child with my hand in the jar. But what a mind trip for a grown woman. How much- how often are women still qualified as incapable adults?

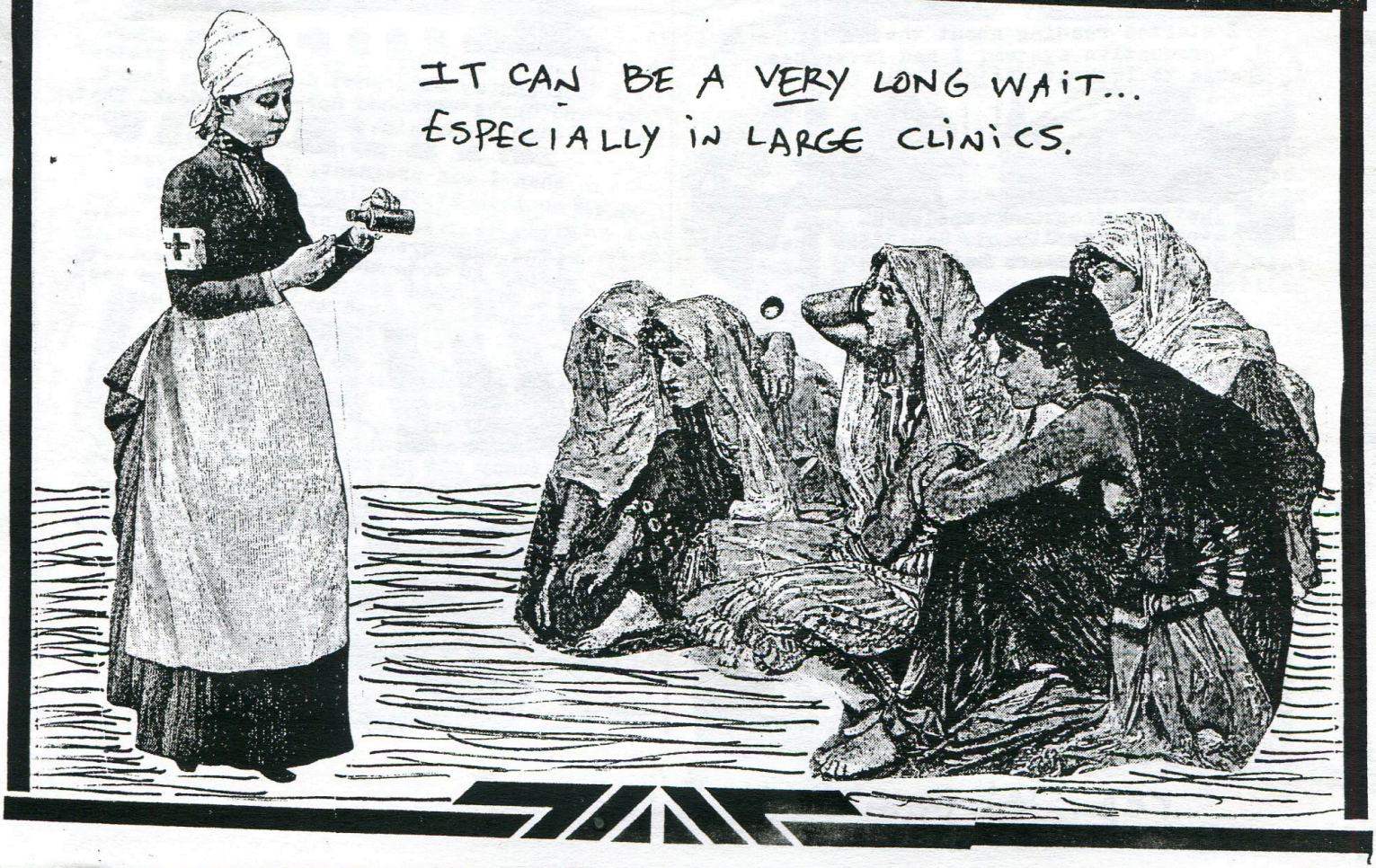
I think of how much I needed to leave in my mother's car with her words "pretend you have two broken legs. I don't want you to move around so much. I love you." How much I needed to be a child with a strong advocate. When the nurse turned me into a child it was political. When my mother turned me into a child it was personal. The whole issue is personal. When it is turned political I become a statistic of a non-recidivist teen-age abortion- haver. That makes me so angry. I can see how childish it may seem that many years later I still cry. I want to throw a temper tantrum. Pull my hair out, curse my sister who told me to never talk about "IT". I want to knock the signs out of the hands of those women who block the entrances to clinics. I would beg them to take a good look at this world we live in, and dare them to not think of it as "fine". I want to get close and ask

them to suspend their judgment and listen to my story. A story so personal that the only way I can tell you is if you sit next to me. If you don't sit next to me and hold my hand I'll tell you it's just "fine". But with you so close I'll know you'll want to hear and when with sweaty palm my hand grips your hand you'll know the hard apprehensive heartache. When my voice chokes up to a whisper you will still be able to hear me. *When I start to cry you'll know I'm crying for how much we hurt each other. I'm crying out for a humanity that is more than the sum of its parts. Where each part is important, thoughtful and respected. I'm trying to do my part to be thoughtful and respectful, yet only individuals can make each other important.*

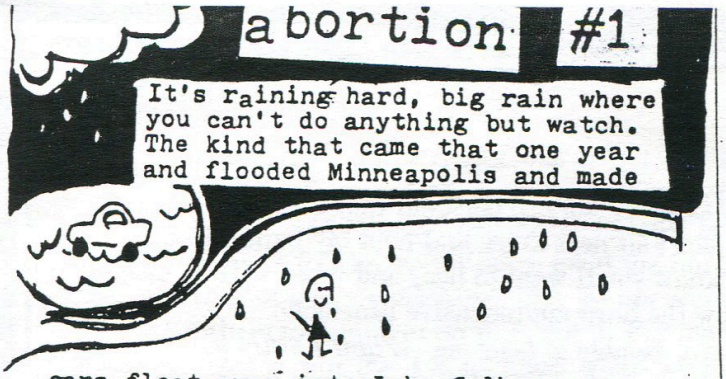
-written by Shanna

"If men could get pregnant, abortion would be a sacrament."

-Florence Kennedy

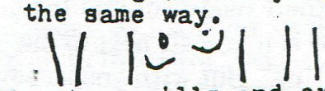


abortion #1



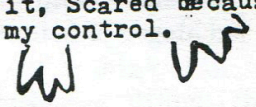
It's raining hard, big rain where you can't do anything but watch. The kind that came that one year and flooded Minneapolis and made cars float away into Lake Calhoun. That flooded my basement and Padrick came over to help me pick my wet records up from the floor and wait for my pregnancy tests to come back. I didn't know they had do it yourself home kits then. Padrick was my friend, not my boy. My records were ruined, but the phone rang, negative she said, and I jumped up and down and we walked down Highway 7 to the Willhopin to celebrate with a game of pool.

Those were the days of being 16-18, and worrying forever about pregnancy. When I was on the pill, but still scared every month that my period wouldn't come and my life would be ruined. No matter what I did, there was always the chance that my body would betray me,. I hated it and distrusted it for that. Abortion was one of those "It's ok. I'm not against it,. but I couldn't do it myself' kind of things,. and my friends mostly felt the same way.



I got my pills and exams at the teen clinic, where they made you feel guilty for even coming in the door. The old man doctor would put that cold metal speculum in, poke around without telling you a thing about what he was doing. That shit was more tramatic than the first time I got pregnant, 5 years later. I'd learned some things by them and knew that what happened in my body was my own decision. I didn't have any moral problems or guilt.

but my emotional state was pretty fragile. I went back and forth between being fascinated and scared. Fascinated by what was going on and my reactions to it, Scared because it felt all out of my control.



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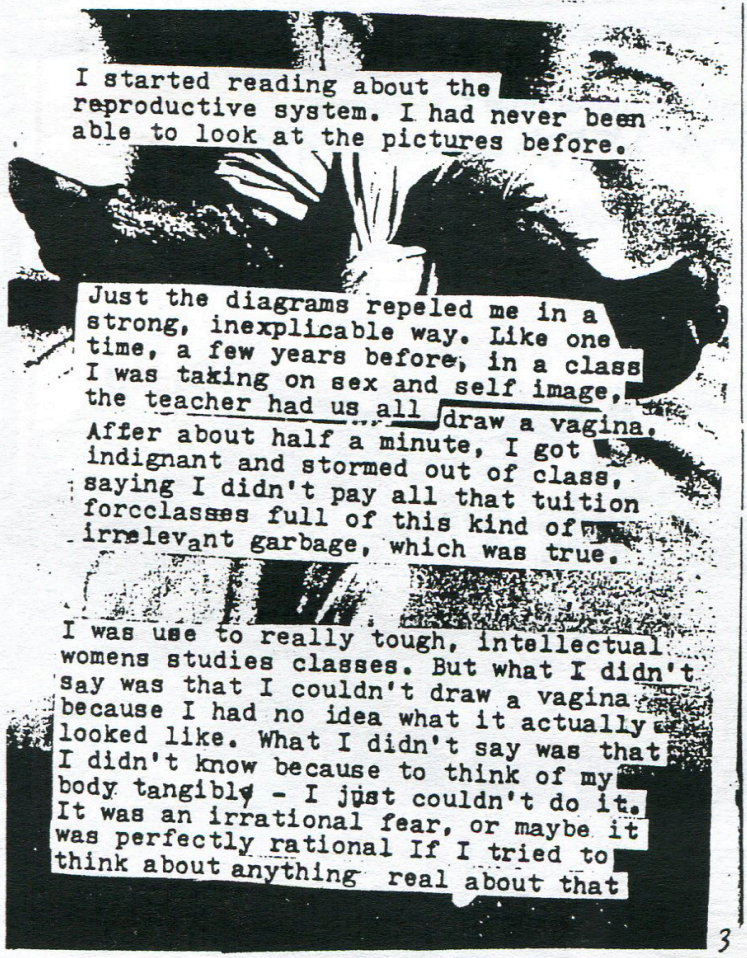
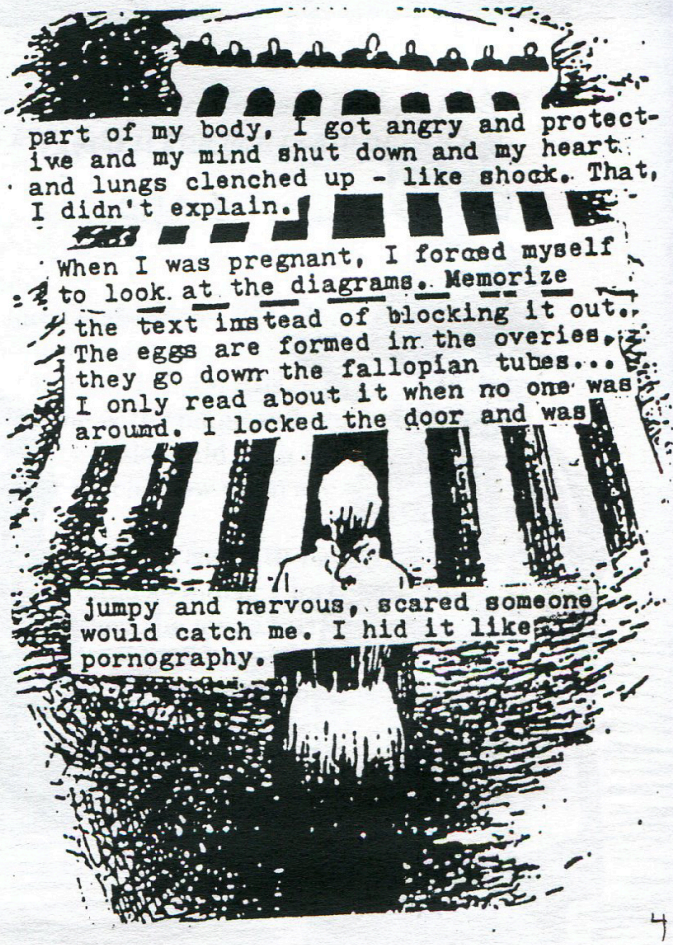


I started reading about the reproductive system. I had never been able to look at the pictures before. Just the diagrams repeled me in a strong, inexplicable way. Like one time, a few years before, in a class I was taking on sex and self image, the teacher had us all draw a vagina. After about half a minute, I got indignant and stormed out of class, saying I didn't pay all that tuition forclasses full of this kind of irrelevant garbage, which was true. I was use to really tough, intellectual womens studies classes. But what I didn't say was that I couldn't draw a vagina because I had no idea what it actually looked like. What I didn't say was that I didn't know because to think of my body tangibly - I just couldn't do it. It was an irrational fear, or maybe it was perfectly rational If I tried to think about anything real about that part of my body, I got angry and protective and my mind shut down and my heart and lungs clenched up - like shock. That, I didn't explain.

3



When I was pregnant, I forced myself to look at the diagrams. Memorize the text instead of blocking it out. The eggs are formed in the overies, they go down the fallopian tubes... I only read about it when no one was around. I locked the door and was jumpy and nervous, scared someone would catch me. I hid it like pornography.

4

reprinted from Doris #12 zine

It seemed almost cliche, but learning about my body and the changes going on in it, and knowing that it wasn't out of control, It made me feel like my body was strong and mine. It was a way I'd never felt before.

The abortion itself wasn't too bad. I had it done at a feminist health clinic and the women there took care of me the way it should be done. They held up a mirror, and that was the first time I'd seen those parts of me. They explained every touch and every second of the procedure. Now you'll feel the spedulum, this is the local anesthetic, you'll feel some cramping now as she dialates the os, breathe deep. One woman held my hand, talked to me and tried to help me relax. It was the first time I'd had a woman gynacologist and the first time anyone had bothered to explain what was going on. It was the first time I didn't feel alienated and violated by what was being done. They demystified my body and gave it back to me.

9

the therapist was more freaked out than me. She couldn't believe I didn't intend to tell "the father". she wouldn't leave me alone so I finally told her I'd think about it (lie)

"Hey Bill. Remember that night a couple months ago when you were over at my house + I was drunk + we fucked? I was pretty surprised since it had been a year since we'd done that kind of thing + I couldn't really stand to be around you! I was surprised too that you came inside me with no protection, since you knew full well that if I wasn't fertile I'd tell you + if I didn't say anything then it wasn't ok. well, guess what! now I have to deal with it + no, I'm not asking you for money. I don't even like to talk to you about the most boring things + I don't even like to see you around, especially now. but I'm told I should tell you about whats going on inside of me since society at large seems to think it's your fetus too. I disagree, but then my opinion doesn't count for much here."

7

abortion #2

at the welfare office I had to write "unborn" in the name place and sign as its legal guardian.

norplant had just come on the market + they were pushing it like crazy. I think the clinic was sponsored by that drug company. They were appalled that I would still trust myself to make my own contraception choices - after all, this was my (gasp) second abortion. I couldn't exactly tell them that abortion, as back up to fertility awareness + condoms + abstinence was a lot healthier and safer than the pill + I'm sure it's got to be better than a fucking implant.

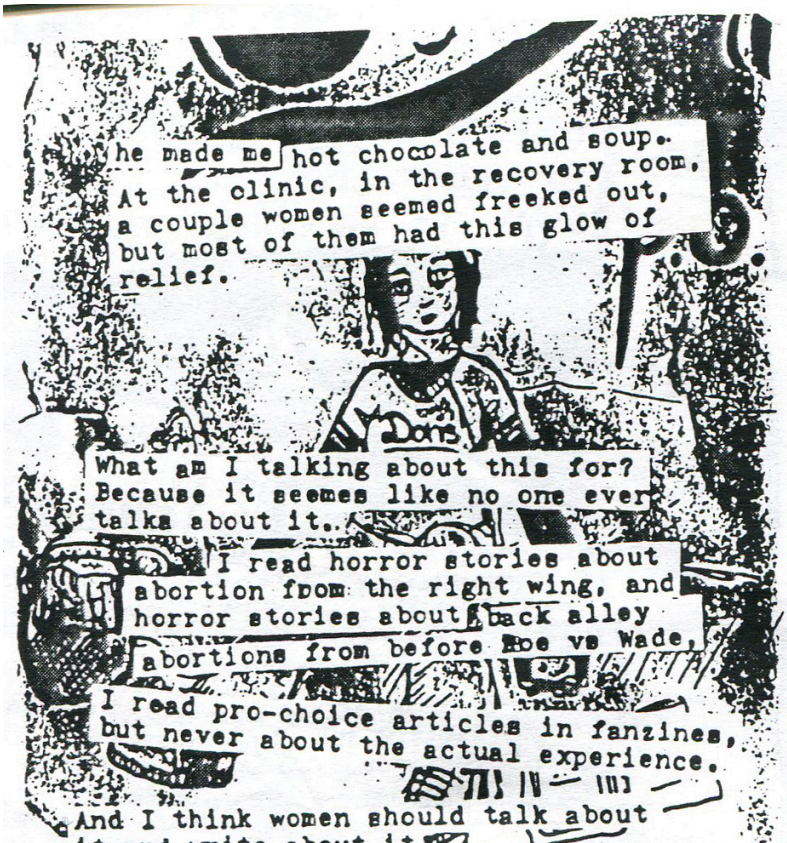
5

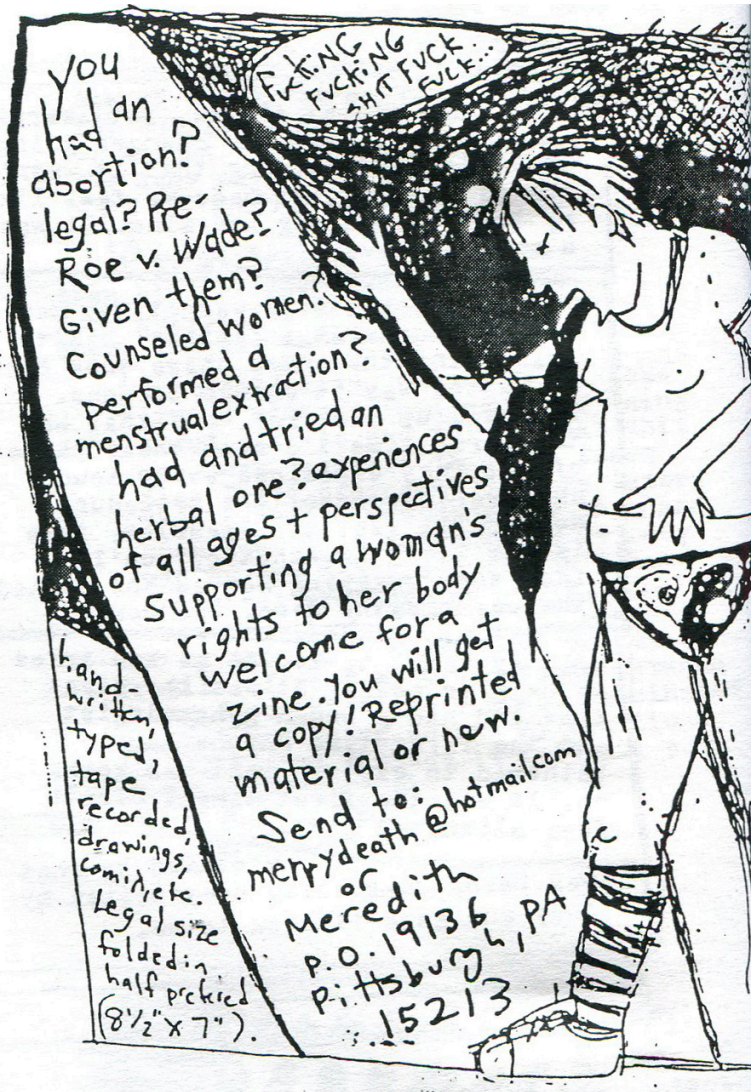
abortion #3

I think it's the waiting that's the worst. That's why #3 wasn't so bad. I pretty much just convinced myself I wasn't pregnant until I was 2 months along. I had one day of swearing and cursing and worry, got a test the next day and an abortion the next, andit was over.

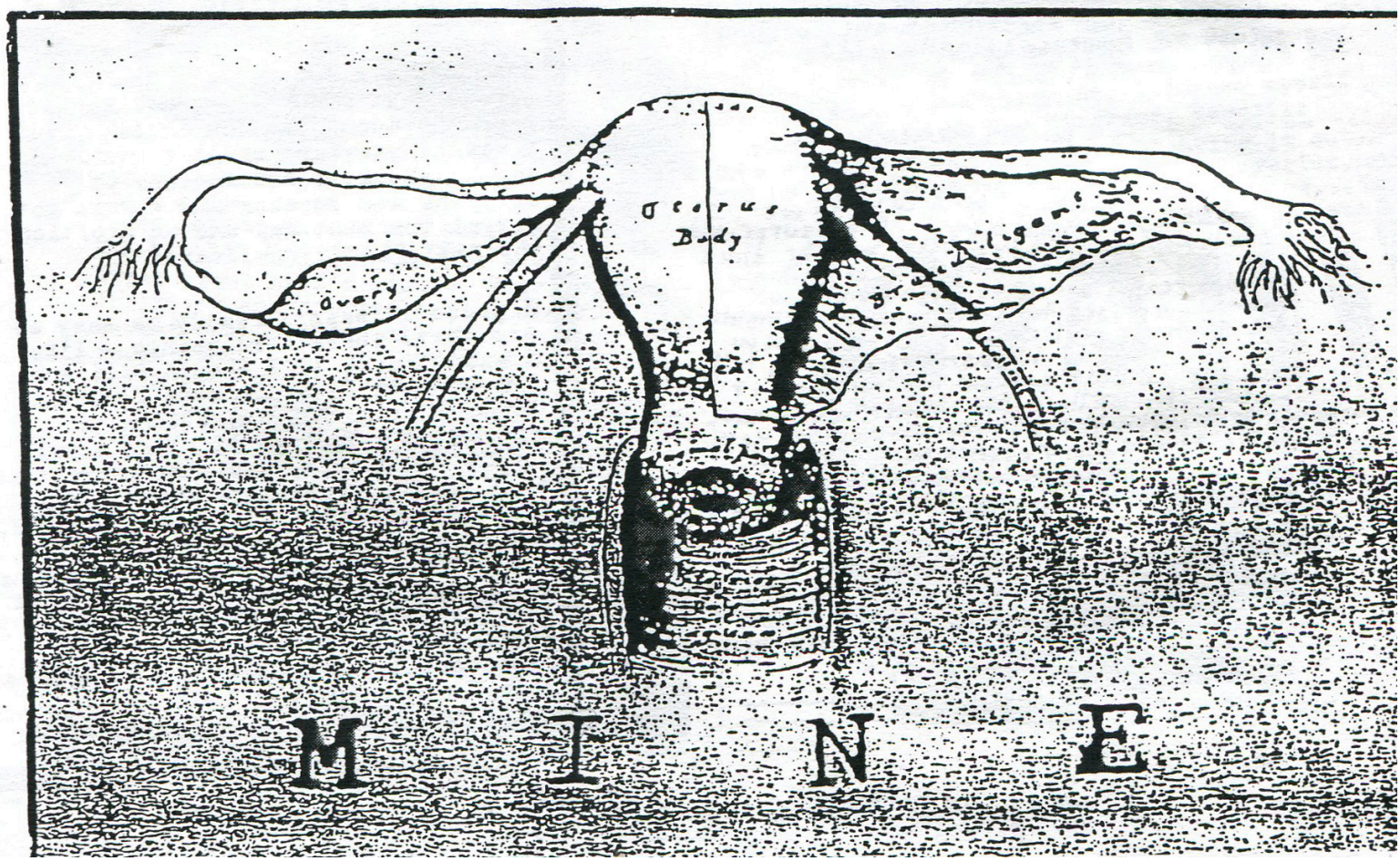
I guess it wasn't really as easy as all that. There were things - like I wasn't sure if I should tell anyone because I wasn't sure I wanted to deal with their reactions. I figured I'd just go it alone - walk up to the clinic, past the protesters. Spit in the protesters faces. Then I remembered that I'm kind of anemic, and it is kind of nerve wracking, and I'm not always that strong. Abortions hurt, there's no doubt about it, but it only takes a few minutes. Some women get sedated and don't really remember it but I like to know what's going on. In the end I went along, but I had told my best friend, and

reprinted from Doris #12 zine





Istory by cindy reprinted from DORIS #12

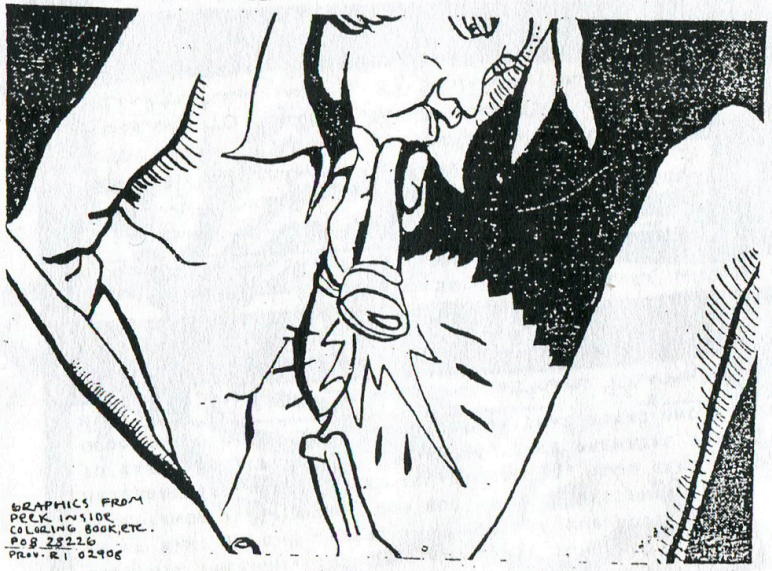


ABORTION

IT IS CRAZY TO ME HOW TABOO A SUBJECT ABORTION IS. SO MANY PEOPLE HAVE HAD THEM, AND SO MANY PEOPLE PROBABLY NEED OR WANT TO TALK ABOUT THEM, BUT THERE IS SUCH A SILENCE AROUND IT. SUCH FEAR AND JUDGEMENT AND DEFENSIVENESS. I WANT TO TALK ABOUT MINE.

I WANT TO HEAR OTHER PEOPLE'S STORIES. I WANT TO CHANGE THE WHOLE WAY THE THING IS SEEN AND FELT AND I WANT TO CHANGE THE WHOLE WAY THE PROCEDURE IS USUALLY DONE. I WANT ABORTION TO BE OURS. FOR IT TO BE DONE WITH WOMEN WHO CARE ABOUT US, IN SPACES WE FEEL SAFE AND COMFORTABLE IN.

FOR US TO HAVE THE SUPPORT WE NEED TO FEEL WHAT WE FEEL SURROUNDING ABORTION AND DURING IT; AND FOR US TO TALK AND FIND WAYS THAT FEEL RIGHT FOR US. I WANT US TO CREATE OUR OWN DEFINITIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS OF WHAT IS GOING ON IN OUR BODIES.



GRAPHICS FROM PEEK INSIDE COLORING BOOK, ETC. POB 28226 PROV. RI 02908

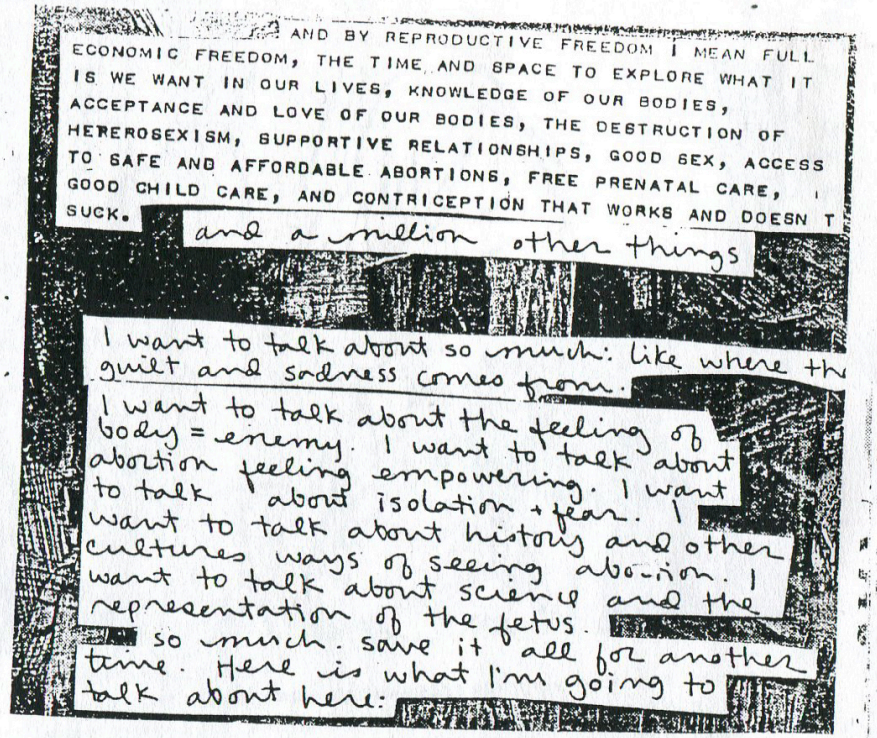
I WANT TO TALK ABOUT ABORTION A LOT, BUT WHEN IT COMES DOWN TO IT, I NEVER REALLY DO. I'M PROTECTIVE OF MY EXPERIENCE. THERE IS SO MUCH OF THE WORLD JUDGING AGAINST ME, THAT I DON'T WANT TO RISK SEEING THAT JUDGEMENT IN FRIENDS EYES.

WE HAVE BEEN KEPT QUIET. WE HAVE HAD OUR HISTORIES HIDDEN FROM US, CONTROL OF OUR BODIES AND OUR HEALTH CARE SYSTEMATICALLY STOLEN FROM US. WE HAVE NOT BEEN THE ONES CREATING THE WAYS IN WHICH ABORTION IS TALKED ABOUT PUBLICLY, OR THE LANGUAGE IT IS TALKED ABOUT IN.

my questions are really different than the ones people talk about. I don't care about when "life" begins or when is a fetus viable. I have different questions altogether. like even if we define what is growing inside of us as potential life, what makes that sacred? and if we do see it as sacred, why aren't there a million ways to honor it, and our decision not to let it continue to grow.

why is that particular potential seen in a moral glare, and why isn't it more of a moral imperative to create a culture where women have networks of care and support, and full reproductive freedom.

reprinted from Doris #19 zine by cindy



ABORTION IN AMERICA in the 1800's (Simplified)

In the U.S., in the 1800's, there were very few schools of medicine. There was no body of Western science to be trained in, and so the schools mainly taught "heroic" measures, such as massive bleedings, prescription of mass amounts of laxitives, or opium. The doctors trained in these schools were called "regulars". It was important to upper class people to feel like they were being treated by men of their same class, and so the regular doctors were given this social standing.

In the early 1800's, when a woman stopped menstruating, she was not considered to be pregnant until she could feel the fetus moving inside of her. Before this movement (which was called quickening), she was thought of as having blocked menses.

Even if she felt like something was growing inside of her, it was not considered to be necessarily a potential child. It could be anything, and it was considered perfectly normal and right for a woman to do whatever she could to expell the burden blocking her menses, if she so chose. This view was so common that even religious newspapers carried advertisements of people who would help restore your menses.

there were a lot of medical practitioners other than the regulars. There were the Eclectics, who had their own schools and newspapers and were trained in preventative care and mild herbal cures. There were midwives and general town healers (and some quacks). The regular doctors didn't want to be associated with these folks. They wanted full control of medical practices and knowledge, so they talked to their friends in the legislature and got medical licensing laws passed.

At first, these laws had no popular support, and they spurred a huge popular health movement. This movement was inseparable from feminist and class struggles.

The popular health movement said that doctoring should not be a paid occupation. They believed people should be taught about self-care, that women should learn about their bodies. Around this time, there began to be a lot more literature available to women about their bodies, and there was a general interest in family limitation. It was openly advocated that women shouldn't have to have more kids than they wanted, and that excessive childbearing was sending women to the grave, and also impeding their health and happiness. There was a lot of public discussion about contraception (most of what was available didn't work very well) and about instruments for abortion. Even Parke Davis Co. sold a DIY abortion kit called "Utero Vaginal Syringe" through the mail.

It is estimated that the rate of abortion rose from 1 in every 25-30 births to 1 in every 5-6 births. And for the first time, it became apparent that white, married, protestant, middle class women were having abortions.

All this caused a lot of problems for the "regular" doctors. First of all, the regulars were losing clients because the regulars didn't believe in abortion, at any stage (they had all signed the Hippocratic Cath. Hippocrates, a Greek physician from around 400BC, was against abortion. He held a minority view for his time. Both Plato and Aristotle thought it was fine).

Another big problem the regulars had, was they were white supremists, and they were afraid that if white women started limiting their family sizes, and immigration into the U.S. continued, it wouldn't be long before whites were in the minority. They were also scared that women were starting to get funny ideas about their place in society. They wanted to keep women in their place - as housekeepers and child raisers.

So, basically, the regular doctors were racist sexist, money hungry, status and power seeking fucks, and they were friends with the rich guys who tended to get into political office, and the rich guys who owned newspapers. The doctors went around, trying to use all their influence to turn public opinion against abortion. It was a long and hard struggle for them.

The first laws against abortion that were passed, were parts of general public health laws, meant to protect women from bad doctors.

they said it was against the law for a pregnant woman to take herbs or undergo medical procedures to induce miscarriage, but they were really only used to prosecute doctors who botched abortions.

It's pretty amazing to me that even with these first few laws, causing miscarriage before quickening was not considered against the law. It also was not considered against the law to perform an abortion if the womans life or health were in danger. These things didn't even have to be written into the law - they were just common understanding.

These laws didn't satisfy the regular doctor doctors in the least. They started pushing newspapers to print sensationalized stories about abortions gone wrong, and they pushed for laws to be passed that were against the right of abortion providers to advertise. They formed the American Medical Association, and made a long, concerted effort to control and professionalize medicine; to be the only ones dictating how it is alowed to be practiced and how it is talked about and seen. And slowly but surely, the fuckers won.

but they won't win forever

reprinted from Doris #19 zine by Cindy

abortion in america
by JAMES MOHR

FETAL SUBJECTS, FEMINIST POSITIONS, ed. LYNN MORGAN

WITCHES, MIDWIVES + NURSES
by EHRENREICH + ENGLISH

art by merrydeath

Advocate

Holding a file-chart in my arms, I open the door to the waiting room and call the name on the chart. A name I can't write here because when I started this job, I signed a confidentiality agreement, meaning no names, no identifying details.

She stands up slowly, tucks her frizzy blond hair behind her ears, and picks up a heavy, black shoulder bag. She whispers a parting message to the nervous-looking man beside her. The other women seated in the waiting room watch her and fidget nervously.

As she walks past me through the doorway, I ask her how she is doing. She grimaces at me. No one is ever really glad to see me at this job.

I introduce myself as her 'advocate.' I tell her, in only a slightly joking manner, that that means I'm to be her moral support for the day.

As an advocate, my job is to bring patients back from the waiting room, stay with them while they undress, get them on the exam table; waiting for the doctor, for their "procedure." I stand next to the patient for the approximated 5-10 minutes, during the shots of lytocaine with the 6-inch needle, holding their hand, if they need it, through the dilation process. I try to talk to them over the loud humming of the little square machine with the tubes coming out of it. Some people don't want to hold my hand, don't want me to talk to them, but I stand there, nonetheless.

We walk into the exam room, I close the door behind myself.

"You need to get undressed from the waist down," I tell her. "If you brought a pad with you, put it in your underwear now, because you won't feel like it later. There is a curtain in the corner that you can pull for privacy."

"You'll be seeing more than this in a few minutes," she quips.

She's right.

I ask if she has any questions. Patients rarely do. Every clinic I've worked at has an exhaustive consenting process. 'Fully informed consent.' This means the clinic staff goes through the entire abortion process at least two, if not more times, in detail. By the time they get to me, they're sick of hearing about it.

However, there are those who ask me, with a look of morbid apprehension on their face, how much this is going to hurt. I am totally honest with them. I tell them everyone experiences pain differently. I say that some women feel hardly any pain at all, which is sometimes true, but that some women feel really intense cramping, which is usually the case.

I have a little speech that I go through with every patient, which includes how important slow, deep breathing is, how they need to keep still, or it will hurt more, or possibly cause the instruments to puncture their uterus. I finish by saying that if they can focus on relaxing, the procedure is much less painful.

"Have you *had* one of these?" this patient asks as I finish my schpiel.

"Yes, I have," I answer truthfully.

"Then you know that you've got to be kidding," she replies.

I want to argue that the relaxation technique I'd learned prior to my abortion was the only thing that had kept me from screaming and jumping off the table, as some women are apt to do.

But I don't say anything. We all have to handle this in our own way.

Soon, the doctor walks in. He jokes around with all the patients, making light of the situation. This appalled me at first. But it seems to help the patients calm down, some of them even laugh.

I offer my hand to hold as the doctor inserts the first speculum. At first, she declines my offer, but as the needle goes into her cervix, her eyes get big and she gropes for my hand at her side.

She apologizes for squeezing so hard.

I tell her my hands have gotten strong over the year or two I've been an advocate.

"You can't hurt me," I tell her.

As the abortion proceeds, I focus on her face, telling her to relax, to breathe. At this point, I don't think she hears me; she's in her head, hopefully somewhere safe. I just try to keep my voice constant, just in case it helps.

My stomach lurches a little as I see her pain; it does every time. I hate the state of our culture, that forces abortion to be such an invasive, painful, clinical experience. I hate that these women have to drive miles and miles and wade through angry, insulting protesters just to get access to what is their right. I hate the political climate that allows men in office to slowly take more and more control over our bodies. And I hate, I hate, I hate that so many of these women are going to walk out of the clinic today harboring guilt, worrying that they have done something horrible, some of them even hating themselves for taking a stand for the life they want to live.

After it's all over, I help her into the big, comfortable underwear she brought. I help her pull her pants on. I tell her she doesn't have to put her shoes back on yet, if she doesn't want to.

Her shoes in one hand, her chart under my arm, my other arm is around her waist as I walk her to the recovery room. She is telling me how glad she'll be to get home to her kids.

I hand her chart to the nurse, and sit my patient in a reclining chair, laying a pad over her stomach for her cramps. I pat her knee and tell her goodbye.

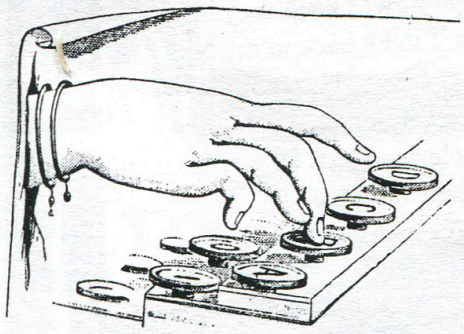
As I do this, my eyes start to tear up. Sometimes that happens. I turn around to leave before she can notice.

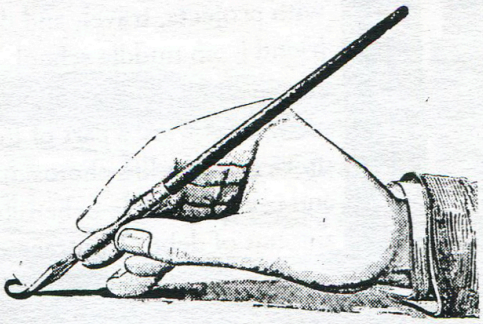
I'm with these women for half an hour, tops. For some of them, I'm just another person in a nametag. But I think (I hope) that I've helped some. Some women ask me if I think they've done wrong, having an abortion. More than one has asked me "How can you *do* this?"

For that half-hour, no matter what they do or what they say, I love these women. I love seeing the strength that comes out of them when the pain gets so intense. Some of them will even deny this strength, but I've seen it. I love them because they are doing what they have to do, and not letting some fucked-up morality force them to do otherwise.

I started doing this because when I was 18 and having an abortion, I had an advocate that helped me (although I can't even remember her name now). I keep doing it because most people won't do this, because I want to try to make these women's abortions a little less painful, because I'm scared that the time is not far off when this right will be taken away from us again.

by Jenn





So far, I have made it 25 years without wanting to be pregnant, and I was raised and believed in a woman's rights to her own body. Even before I got pregnant, I wrote essays and did historical research about the issue in middle school. In College I silk-screened t-shirts and continue to produce art about preserving a woman's rights to her body. I used fertility awareness; using daily basal thermometer charts and checking the consistency of mucus and using condoms on fertile days for a couple years. In that time I never got pregnant, though I had acquired quite a few books on women's health, and a copy of an herbal abortion handbook, and had studies to the point that I felt confident that if I got pregnant I would use herbs to abort. In the last few years I have been with the same partner, but we always use condoms. I've always thought of myself as a responsible person, almost to a fault. But after almost four years of being with my current partner, we were careless one day just after my period; usually a time I am not fertile, and that one time of unprotected sex left me pregnant. I felt devastated; in disbelief that I could get pregnant. I felt like it was the end of the world. I struggled with who to tell, what to do, and spent a long time unproductively screaming and punching my lower abdomen, crying hysterically. I always thought that pregnancy would never happen to me. I found out just a couple weeks before my band was leaving for a three-week tour. I tried to schedule an appointment in New Orleans, where I was living, and they had no openings until after tour; meaning a lot more expensive and a lot more frustrating for me. Plus, there is 24 hour waiting period, where in New Orleans they give you material that is anti-abortion, and I couldn't stand the idea of going through a condescending counseling about how I probably should keep a baby I didn't want.

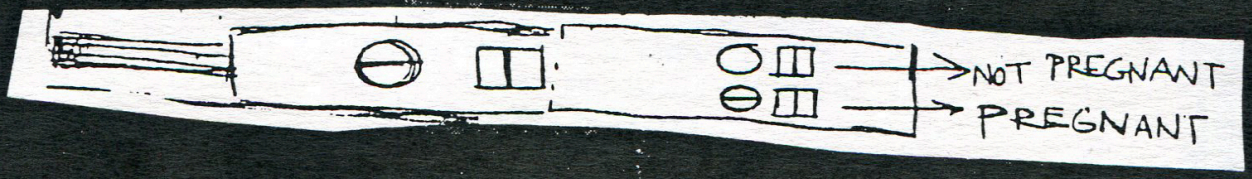
So, I decided to get an abortion in New York while on tour; expecting a much more caring and loving environment for women seeking the procedure. While on tour in Iowa I saw a headline that read "House of Representatives Passes The Rights of the Unborn Act" and read in shock at another attempt to lower accessibility of abortion in this country. I became scared that by the time we got to New York the clinics would be closed. However, we finally made it to New York for my appointment. I was not expecting the 8-hour wait, or the speediness through which the doctor giving the procedure rushes women in and out of the room. I caught sight of the last woman leaving the room as I entered. I was probably the only woman that opted for only local anesthesia; the doctor seemed so dis-attached and cold that I could only assume he rarely dealt with women being fully awake in the room with him. I expected the doctor to be a woman; I have only had female gynecologists. So I was surprised by his sex and also by his attitude; it seemed to me he was more concerned with the money in his pocket than with women's health. The post abortion care felt more loving, the nurses were all very good and a vast contrast to the male doctor.

There is no way that I wanted or could see myself having a baby right now, I keep very busy with projects, travel, and don't have the patience to stay home with a child. I think back to my best friend from middle school, who got pregnant at age 17 and had a shotgun wedding. Her mother was always showing us awful pro-life propaganda; photos of fetuses (that were never aborted in the first place) that were a part of their gruesome arsenal. I think that only sick people get a kick out of blowing up larger than life photos of death. I received word from my old friend and she now has four children, and is highly active in her church. They barely scrape by on her husbands pay check and have a great amount of debt. Contraceptives are against their Catholicism (how she got pregnant in the first place),

so she could possibly have more children in the future. She got in touch with me when I found out I was pregnant, and the contrast in our lives was so striking for me at that moment. We were so close before, and there was a part of me that wondered if my life would be more similar to hers if I hadn't gone to boarding school. I know a lot of radical mothers at this point in my life, highly active, amazing women, who have been able to balance raising their children and pursuing other interests. I wonder sometimes if I could be as strong as they are. One thing I have realized is that women without children can alienate mothers, and women who had abortions often don't talk about it. I wish I could talk about abortion with my old best friend as well as talk about her children. I wonder how pregnancy has become something we only talk about with certain people who have shared our experiences. I think it's cultural, I imagine that when midwives delivered babies they also aided in miscarriages. I want us to talk about reproductive choices of all kinds. My experience in New York reaffirmed my feelings that abortion must be kept legal, but it also has given me perspective that abortion and birthing needs to be done in a comfortable and safe environment. I have heard about clinics in Olympia that are very supportive, more friendly and caring, for mothers and women ending pregnancies. That is the kind of health care all women deserve. The rush-rush attitudes; the dehumanization of women seeking healthcare, the way doctors often write off women's feelings as "crazy" or "hysteric" have to leave the health care profession. I feel that more women would look back to their ended, or in some cases continued, pregnancies with less grief or doubt if they were not stigmatized for their life choices.

I have found that many of us are still afraid to come forward with our full names, with our complete stories, because there is such a stigmatization around the issue. Women feel that if we admit to unsafe sex, or multiple partners, or we repeat the lies that we believed about our bodies told to us from other women or men, that we will be seen as "dirty" or "deserving" of whatever future we face. We have to create an atmosphere where women can trust our health care professionals and be supported, regardless of what choices she makes. Even though rural young white women have the highest rates of pregnancy out of wedlock in this country, people still believe poor women of color to be the "problem" in America. I believe part of this has to do with white women being afraid to "soil" their reputation by talking about their abortions. The religious right has a lot of money, more resources, more outward drive than the choice movement in this country, and have done a great job of instilling guilt into women that have abortions. Therefore, we need to increase our level of action about this issue. If we continue to let ourselves feel guilt or shame, it will be that much easier for abortion to become more and more inaccessible. Most women get pregnant at least once in their life, and we must work to create a supportive environment for women to share their experiences and not live or heal in silence. I believe that in an ideal world every pregnancy would be a desired one. But a reality is that many contraceptives are not available over the counter, free, or available to minors. Many schools have abstinence only sexual education discussions. So many factors affect women's lives; who their partners are, our self confidence, our access to information. I believe that we need to work on education and resource distribution, and we also need to improve communication and supportive atmospheres for women to discuss sex and our reproductive choices. I hope these stories help women to start to talk to each other about sex, our bodies, our health, our lives. Becoming pregnant and choosing an abortion has had the amazing impact on my life of reevaluating my priorities and realizing that now, more than ever, women need to stay on the front lines to tell the world that our bodies are our own and we will not be passive or silent.

-merrydeath



I have witnessed and assisted in over 1,000 safe, legal abortions. I have also witnessed more illegal abortions than I can remember and have seen safe clinics shut down by federal and international policy.

My name is Andrea DeChellis and I have worked for an abortion provider as a counselor and procedure room assistant for over 2 and a half years. I have also worked outside of the United States in public health. For two summers, I interned with women's clinics that provide abortions in Nicaragua, where all forms of intended terminations are illegal. I met women, networks of practitioners, and entire communities that put everything on the line to provide women with what limited control over their bodies they could offer.

It is an issue of control, by the way. No matter how many stories of ethics and federal funding and responsibility are generated, it comes down to a basic issue of a woman being able to control the way her own body is treated. The resonance of this fundamental philosophy goes in all directions - I've witnessed the same anti-choice, restriction endorsing entities pushing forced sterilizations and mandatory hormone treatment in Free Trade Zones (and elsewhere) in the name of profits and putting poor people of color our of their genetic misery.

Anyway, until we as women can internalize the issue in the language of CONTROL, we ourselves do not have tools necessary to take control. I've counseled patients who have had repeated abortions and don't want to begin any hormonal, barrier, calendar or herbal contraception method, not because they are irresponsible or feel that abortion is a form of contraception, but because they have no sense of self-efficacy. They've been given no control over basic health decisions otherwise - why should they feel in control now? The fatalist attitude of these women is not the problem - it is a symptom of a diseased system that doesn't educate people about sexual health, doesn't have universal healthcare, doesn't cover birth control plans, doesn't have federal funding for abortion, and ships women off to different states that provide for later term abortions when women should have local access to abortion providers.

We have a lot of work to do in our own communities, our states and beyond our national borders. There is much to be learned about national policies for reproductive health and it's important to identify how the system works. There are important links to class and race politics, eugenics, capitalism and imperialism. As women, we are in similar and strikingly different situations simultaneously, and the connections are devastating.

Solidarity,
~andrea

I had an abortion (or a releasing ceremony as I think of it) last April a week before leaving on a trip to Greece. I found out I was pregnant and although I hadn't planned to conceive, I was a bit shocked that I had this overwhelming feeling of being trapped. I am a midwifery student, love babies and would love to have a few dozen of my own, but when faced with the two lines on the test, I knew that this wasn't the time. It seemed like an easy decision at first. Very clear, very rational - I would have an abortion. Or so I thought. The next week was an emotional ride through my subconscious, and all the beliefs I though I held were questioned. I realized that I am a product of my culture and my upbringing, and no amount of radical politiccs and life experience could completely undo that. I was sad that I was loosing my babies, but then I felt guilty for feeling sad - it was my decision, right? I had no right to feel sad. The rational part of me decided to have a menstrual extraction at home with a Midwife friend who has helped many women through this passage of life. I knew that, as happy as I was that abortion was legal, that I couldn't go to a clinic and have the procedure done by people I didn't know in a place I had never been. Just as I know that I will give birth at home, I knew I would release my baby at home. I did alot of journaling and soul searching that week. I talked alot with my Midwife who never once made me feel bad for my decision or the feelings I had. She validated my pain, and in the end, validated my triumph and new found strength. She was a priestess of the dark moon for me.

We decided a time that she would come to my house, but I wasn't ready, and cancelled. I needed more time. I talked with my baby twice, telling her that this was not the right time, and to go back to the resting place she came from and that I would call her back in a few years. After the second talk, I knew it was time. I called my midwife, and my friend who was to be my support person and went on a walk to calm my thoughts.

The sun was streaming in the window as I sat on the bed while my midwife explained the tools she would be using. We burned sage and invoked Goddesses and ancestors to be with us during out rite, and then we began. I decided to do it without any pain meds (ibuprofin) because I felt like I needed to feel what was happening fully. And feel it I did. I was just under 8 weeks from conception, so we used the largest canula she had (any later and I would have had to go to the clinic) and going through the inner os hurt like hell. I breathed and moaned through the procedure, it was just like giving birth, I felt honored to be able to fully be present in this moment. I started to feel light headed from the shock to my body, but I had my friends hands on me to help me feel grounded and a stone in each hand to connect me to mother earth. When it was done and I said no to the midwifes question of if I thought there was anything left in my womb I recieved hugs and praise. We looked in the bowl that we washed the blood in and saw that there were two trees of life (chorionic villi - we look to see that they are intact to know that everything came out) - I had carried twins!

I drank apple juice to help with the dizziness and rested. My Goddess daughter came home soon after and ran to fetch me food and more drink to "make me better." I felt strong and powerful. I knew that I had made the right decision and felt that I was in a new phase of my life.

My friend planted my blood in her garden next to her baby she had released an earlier year. That Summer, two tulips different colors than the rest appeared to soothe me.

~Amara

****

Send any stories to merrydeath@hotmail.com or to
Meredith P.O.B. 19136 Pittsburgh, Pa 15213
I am still accepting more submissions for future printings. Also if you want to send comics, a taped interview or self recorded story that needs to be transcribed, I am willing to type up the stories and send them to you for final edits. All contributors get a free copy. I accept any stories that are not *anti*-choice, but as editor may choose not to use pieces that I believe are harmful to protecting or supporting our rights as women to carry or not carry a pregnancy to term.
If you want to carry multiple copies of this zine, get in touch with me for distribution. If you want to make copies of this zine, please do so. I am planning on putting any profits from this zine to go to future printings, and possibly eventually into a bound book if it becomes large enough and I can find a publisher. Single copies are available from me for $3.00 postpaid or $2.00 in person.

Some questions that I have asked women are;

What are the circumstances surrounding your abortion experience? Were you with one partner? Multiple partners? Was pregnancy the result of rape? What kind of support existed for you when you were pregnant? Did you have a ritual to honor the decision not to have a baby? Did you have an unusual type of miscarriage, at home, with herbs, a midwife, etc? How old were you and how available was abortion to you? Did you have to go across state lines to have an abortion? Did your state have multiple laws restricting abortion or did you have a clinic of women who were feminist and supportive? Did you go into debt to have an abortion or was it covered on your insurance? Did a mainstream pro-choice foundation pay for it? Did you have an illegal abortion before Roe v. Wade? How did your own pregnancy change your thoughts or feelings on the issue? Do most people around you have children or have many had abortions? Did your contraceptive method(s) fail? Did you keep it private or tell your family and a community you were a part of? Do you have children before or after your abortion? Have you had multiple abortions? In what ways has your decision changed your life?

Some books to check out:

The Story of Jane the Legendary Underground Feminist Abortion Service by Laura Kaplan
Back Rooms- An Oral History of the Illegal Abortion Era ed by Ellen Messer and Kathryn May
The Choices We Made 25 women and men Speak Out About Abortion ed by Angela Bonavoglia
A Woman's Book Of Choices by Rebecca Chalker and Carol Downer
The Abortionist A Woman Against the Law by Rickie Solinger
Why I Am An Abortion Doctor Suzanne Poppema

Internet resources: www.NARAL.ORG for abortion laws in every state,
For women's stories:
www.naral.org/issues/issues_stories.html
www.fwhc.org/perso.htm
www.cwluherstory.com/CWLUMemoir/Kamen.html
www.plannedparenthood.org/library/ABORTION/womensstor.html
www.fwhc.org/story3.htm
www.ppacca.org/real/index.asp
www.cbctrust.com/nochoice/
www.choice.org/4.views.html
www.feminist.org/rrights/ru486news
www.prochoiceconnection.com/psc02.html

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